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BEVIS

THE STORY OF A BOY

BY

RICHARD JEFFERIES,

AUTHOR OF "THE GAMEKEEPER AT HOME," "WILD LIFE IN A
SOUTHERN COUNTY," "THE AMATEUR POACHER," "GREENE
FERNE FARM," "HODGE AND HIS MASTERS," "ROUND
ABOUT A GREAT ESTATE," "WOOD MAGIC."

"But natures of the noblest frame
These toyles and dangers please;
And they take comfort in the same,
As much as you in ease."
Ulysses and the Syren.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II. . .

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BEVIS.



CHAPTER I.

THE BATTLE CONTINUED—SCIPIO'S CHARGE.

SCIPIO's cohort rushed them clean away from the sycamore. In a mass, Scipio Cecil and his men (fetched by Charlie), with half or more of Cæsar's scattered soldiers, who rallied at once to Cecil's compact party, rushed them right away. Cecil forced his men to be quiet as they ran; they saw the point, and there was not a sound till in close order they fell on Pompey. Pompey, Val, Phil, and the whole attacking party were swept away like leaves before the wind. Had they seen Scipio coming, or heard him, or in the least expected him, it would not have been so. But thus suddenly burst on from the rear, they were helpless, and carried away by the torrent.

In a second Bevis, Mark, Fred, and Bill, found

themselves free. Bevis stood up and breathed again. They came to him. "Are you hurt?" said Mark.

"Not a bit," said Bevis, laughing as he shook himself together. "Look there!"

Whirled round and round by the irresistible pressure of the crowd, Pompey and his lieutenants were hurried away, shouting and yelling, but unable even to strike, so closely were they hemmed in.

"They've got my eagle," said Mark in a fury. His standard-bearer had been overthrown while he defended himself at the tree, and the eagle taken from him.

"Phil's down," said Fred. "So's Tim! And Ike! Hurrah!"

"Look at little Charlie hitting!" said Bill.

"Shout for Charlie," said Bevis. "Capital!"

"My eagle," said Mark.

"Quick," said Bevis suddenly. "Mark—quick; you and Fred, and Bill, and these"—three or four soldiers who came up now things looked better—"run quick, Mark, and get in the hollow, you know where we cooked the bird, they're going that way. See, Ted's beginning to fight again, and you will be behind him. Make an ambush, don't you see? Seize him as he goes by. Quick! I'm tired, I'll follow in a minute."

Off ran Mark, Fred, Bill, and the rest, and making a little circuit, got into the bowl-like hollow. The crowd with Scipio Cecil was still thrusting Pompey and his men before them, but Ted had worked himself free by main force, and he and Val Crassus, side by side, were fighting as they were forced backwards. Step by step they went backwards, but disputing every inch, straight back for the hollow where Mark and his party were crouching. In half a minute Ted would certainly be taken.

“Victory!” shouted Bevis, in an ecstasy of delight. He had been leaning against the sycamore: he stood up and stepped just in front of it to see better, shading his eyes (for his hat had gone long since) with his left hand, the point of his sword touched the ground. He was alone, he rejoiced in the triumph of his men. The gale blew his hair back, and brushed his cheek. His colour rose, a light shone in his eyes.

“We’ve won!” he shouted. Just then the hurricane smote the tree, and as there was less noise near him, he heard a bough crack above. He looked up, thinking it might fall; it did not, but when he looked back Ted was gone.

“He’s down!” said Bevis. “They’ve got him.”

He could see Mark Antony, who had risen out of

the hollow; thus caught between two forces, Scipio pushing in front, the Pompeians broke and scattered to the right in a straggling line.

“Hurrah! But where’s Ted? Hurrah!”

Bevis was so absorbed in the spectacle that, though the fight was only a short distance from him, the impulse to join it did not move him. He was lost in the sight.

“They’re running!”

“I’ve got you!”

Ted Pompey pounced on him from behind the sycamore-tree; Bevis involuntarily started forward, just escaping his clutch, struck, parried, and struck again.

Pompey, while driven backwards step by step by Scipio, had suddenly caught sight of Bevis standing alone by the sycamore. He slipped from Scipio, and ran round just as Bevis looked up at the cracking bough, and Mark sprang out of the hollow. Scipio’s soldiers shouted, seeing Pompey as they thought running away. Mark for a moment could not understand what had become of him, the next he was occupied in driving the Pompeians as they yielded ground. Pompey running swiftly got round behind the tree and darted on Cæsar, whose strategy had left him alone, intending to grasp him and seize him by main force.

Cæsar Bevis slipped from him by the breadth of half an inch.

Pompey hit hard, twice, thrice; crash, clatter. His arm was strong, and the sword fell heavy; rattle, crash. He hit his hardest, fearing help would come to Bevis. Swish! slash!

Thwack! He felt a sharp blow on his shoulder. Bevis kept him off, saw an opportunity, and cut him. With swords he was more than Ted's match. He and Mark had so often practised they had both become crafty at fencing. The harder Ted hit, overbalancing himself to put force into the blow, and the less able to recover himself quickly, the easier Bevis warded, and every three knocks gave Ted a rap. Ted danced round him, trying to get an advantage; he swung his sword to and fro in front of him horizontally. Bevis retired to avoid it past the sycamore. Finding this answer, Ted swung it all the more furiously, and Bevis retreated, watching his chance, and they passed several trees on to the narrow breadth of level short sward between the trees and the quarry.

Ted's chest heaved with the fury of his blows; Bevis could not ward them, at least not so as to be able to strike afterwards. But suddenly, as Ted swung it still fiercer, Bevis resolutely received the

sword full on his left arm—thud, and stopped it. Before Ted could recover himself Bevis hit his wrist, and his sword dropped from it on the ground.

Ted instantly rushed in and grappled with him. He seized him, and by sheer strength whirled him round and round, so that Bevis's feet but just touched the sward. He squeezed him, and tried to get him across his hip to throw him; but Bevis had his collar, and he could not do it. Bevis got his feet the next instant, and worked Ted, who breathed hard, back.

The quarry was very near, they were hardly three yards from the edge of the cliff; the sward beneath their feet was short where the sheep had fed it close to the verge, and yellow with lotus flowers. Yonder far below were the waves, but they saw nothing but themselves.

The second's pause, as Bevis forced Ted back two steps, then another, then a fourth, as they glared at each other, was over. Ted burst on him again. He lifted Bevis, but could not for all his efforts throw him. He got his feet again.

"You punched me!" hissed Ted between his teeth.

"I didn't."

"You did." Ted hit him with doubled fist. Bevis instantly hit back. They struck without much

parrying. At this, as at swords, Bevis's quick eye and hand served him in good stead. He kept Ted back; it was at wrestling Ted's strength was superior. Ted got a straight-out blow on the chin; his teeth rattled.

He hurled himself bodily on Bevis; Bevis stepped back and avoided the direct hug, but the cliff yawned under him. Into Ted's mind there flashed, vivid as a picture, something he had seen when two men were fighting in the road. Without a thought, it was done in the millionth of a second, he tripped Bevis. Bevis staggered, swung round, half saved himself, clutched at Ted's arm, and put his foot back over the cliff into nothing.

Ted did but see his face, and Bevis was gone. As he fell he disappeared; the edge hid him. Crash!

Ted's face became of a leaden pallor, his heart stopped beating; an uncontrollable horror seized upon him. Some inarticulate sound came from between his teeth. He turned and fled down the slope into the firs, through the fields, like the wind, for his home under the hills. He fled from his own act. How many have done that who could have faced the world! Bevis he knew was dead. As he ran he muttered to himself, constantly repeating it, "His bones are all smashed; I heard them. His bones

are all smashed.” He never stopped till he reached his home. He rushed upstairs, locked his door, and got into bed with all his things on.

Bevis was not dead, nor even injured. He had scarcely fallen ten feet before he was brought up by a flake, which is a stronger kind of hurdle. It was one of those originally placed along the edge of the precipice to keep cattle from falling over. It had become loose, and a horse rubbing against it sent it over weeks before. The face of the cliff there had been cut into a groove four or five feet wide years ago by the sand-seekers. This groove went straight down to a deep pool of water, which had filled up the ancient digging for the stone of the lower stratum. As the flake tumbled it presently lodged aslant the cutting, and it was in that position when Bevis fell on it.

His weight drove it down several feet farther, when the lower part caught in a ledge at that side of the groove, and it stopped with a jerk. The jerk cracked one bar of the flake, which was made much like a very slender gate, and it was this sound which Ted in his agony of mind mistook for the smashing of bones.

Bevis when he struck the flake instinctively clutched it, and it was well that he did so, or he would have rolled over into the pool. For the

moment when he felt his foot go into space, he lost conscious consciousness. He really was conscious, but he had no control, or will, or knowledge at the time, or memory afterwards. That moment passed completely out of his life, till the jerk of the flake brought him to himself. He saw the pool underneath as through the bars of a grating, and clasped the flake still firmer.

In that position, lying on it, he remained for a minute, getting his breath, and recognizing where he was. Then he rose up a little, and shouted "Mark!" The gale took his voice out over the New Sea, whose waves were rolling past not more than twenty yards from the base of the cliff.

"Mark!" No one answered. He sat upon the flake still holding it, and began to try and think what he should do if Mark did not come.

His first thought was to climb up somehow, but when he looked he saw that the sand was as straight as a wall. Steps might be cut in the soft sand, and he put his hand in his pocket for his knife, when he reflected that steps for the feet would be of no use unless he had something to hold to as well. Then he looked down, inclined for the moment to drop into the water, which would check his fall, and bring him up without injury. Only the sides of

the pool were as steep as the cliff itself, so that any one swimming in it could not climb up to get out.

He recollected the frog which he and Mark put in the stone trough, to see how it swam, and how it went round and round, and could not escape. So he should be if he fell into the pool. He could only swim round and round until his strength failed him. If the flake broke, or tipped, or slipped again, that was what would happen.

Bevis sat still, and tried to think; and while he did so he looked out over the New Sea. The sun was now lower, and all the waves were touched with purple, as if the crests had been sprinkled with wine. The wind blew even harder, as the sun got nearer the horizon, and fine particles of sand were every now and then carried over his head from the edge of the precipice.

What would Ulysses have done? He had a way of getting out of everything; but try how he would, Bevis could not think of any plan, especially as he feared to move much, lest the insecure platform under him should give way. He could see his reflection in the pool beneath, as if it were waiting for him to come in reality.

While he sat quite still, pondering, he thought he

heard a rumbling sound, and supposed it to be the noise of tramping feet, as the legions battled above. He shouted again, "Mark! Mark!" and immediately wished he had not done so, lest it should be a party fetched by Pompey to seize him; for if he was captured the battle would be lost. He did not know that Pompey had fled, and feared that his shout would guide his pursuers, forgetting in his excitement that if he could not get up to them, neither could they get down to him. He kept still looking up, thinking that in a minute he should see faces above.

But none appeared, and suddenly there was another rumbling noise, and directly afterwards a sound like scampering, and then a splash underneath him. He looked, and some sand was still rolling down sprinkling the pool. "A rabbit," thought Bevis. "It was a rabbit and a weasel. I see—of course! Yes; if it was a rabbit then there's a ledge, and if there's a ledge I can get along."

Cautiously he craned his head over the edge of the flake, carefully keeping his weight as well back as he could. There was a ledge about two feet lower than the flake, very narrow, not more than three or four inches there; but having seen so many of these ledges in the quarry before, he had no

doubt it widened. As that was the extreme end, it would be narrowest there. He thought he could get his foot on it, but the difficulty was what to hold to.

It was of no use putting his foot on a mere strip like that unless there was something for his hand to grasp. Bevis saw a sand-martin pass at that moment, and it occurred to him that if he could find a martin's hole to put his hand in, that would steady him. He felt round the edge of the groove, when, as he extended himself to do so, the flake tipped a little, and he drew back hastily. His chest thumped with sudden terror, and he sat still to recover himself. A humble-bee went by round the edge of the groove, and presently a second, buzzing close to him, and seeing these two he remembered that one had passed before, making three humble-bees.

"There must be thistles," said Bevis to himself, knowing that humble-bees are fond of thistle-flowers, and that there were quantities of thistles in the quarry. "If I can catch hold of some thistles, perhaps I can do it." He wanted to feel round the perpendicular edge again, but feared that the flake would tip. In half a minute he got his pocket-knife, opened the largest blade, and worked it into

the sand farthest from the edge—in the corner—so as to hold the flake there like a nail.

Then with the utmost caution, and feeling every inch of his way, he put his hand round the edge, and moving it about presently felt a thistle. Would it hold? that was the next thing; or should he pull it up if he held to it? How could he hold it tight, the prickles would hurt so. He knew that thistles generally have deep roots, and are hard to pull up, so he thought it would be firm, and besides, if there was one there were most likely several, and three or four would be stronger.

Taking out his handkerchief, he put his hand in it, and twisted it round his wrist to make a rough glove, then he knelt up close to the sand wall, and steadied himself before he started. The flake creaked under these movements, and he hesitated. Should he do it, or should he wait till Mark missed him and searched? But the battle—the battle might be lost by then, and Mark and all his soldiers driven from the field, and Pompey would triumph, and fetch long ladders, and take him prisoner.

Bevis frowned till a groove ran up the centre of his forehead, then he moved towards the verge of the flake, and slowly put his foot over till he felt

the narrow ledge, at the same time searching about with his hand for the thistle. Now he had his foot on the ledge, and his hand on the stem of the thistle ; it was very stout, which reassured him, but the prickles came through the handkerchief. A moment's pause, and he sprang round and stood upright on the ledge.

His spring broke the blade of the knife, and the flake upset and crashed down splash into the pool.

The prickles of the thistle dug deep into his hand, causing exquisite pain.

He clung to the thistle, biting his lips, till he had got his other foot on. One glance showed him his position.

The moment he had his balance he let go of the thistle, and ran along the ledge, which widened to about nine inches or a foot, tending downwards. Running kept him from falling, just as a bicycle remains upright while in motion.

In four yards he leapt down from the ledge to a much broader one, ran along that six or seven yards, still descending, sprang from it down on a wide platform, thence six or eight feet on to an immense heap of loose sand, into which he sank above his knees, struggled slipping as he went down its yielding side, and landed on his hands and knees on

the sword below, while still the wavelets raised by the fall of the flake were breaking in successive circles against the sides of the pool.

He was up in a moment, and stamped his feet alternately to shake the sand off; then he pulled out some of the worst of the thistle points stuck in his hand, and kicked his heels up and danced with delight.

Without looking back he ran up on the narrow bank between the excavation and the New Sea, as the nearest place to look round from. The punt was just there inside the headland. He saw that the waves, though much diminished in force by the point, had gradually worked it nearly off the shore. He could see nothing of the battle, but remembering a place where the ascent of the quarry was easy, and where he and Mark had often run up the slope, which was thinly grown with grass, he started there, ran up, and was just going to get out on the field when he recollected that he was alone, and had no sword, so that if Pompey had got a party of his soldiers, and was looking for him, they could easily take him prisoner. He determined to reconnoitre first, and seeing a little bramble bush and a thick growth of nettles, peered out from beside this cover. It was well that he did so.

Val Crassus, with a strong body of Pompeians, was coming from the sycamores direct towards him. They were not twenty yards distant when Bevis saw them, and instantly crouched on hands and knees under the brambles. He heard the tramp of their feet, and then their voices.

“Where can he be?”

“Are you sure you looked all through the firs?”

“Quite sure.”

“Well, if he isn’t in the firs, nor behind the sycamores, nor anywhere else, he *must* be in the quarry,” said Crassus.

“So I think.”

“I’m sure.”

“Ted’s got him down somewhere.”

“Perhaps he’s hiding from Ted.”

“Can you see him now in the quarry?”

They crowded on the edge, looking over Bevis into the excavated hollow beneath. Now Bevis had not noticed when he crouched that he had put his hand almost on the mouth of a wasp’s nest, but suddenly feeling something tickle the back of his hand, he moved it, and instantly a wasp, which had been crawling over it, stung him. He pressed his teeth together, and shut his eyes in the endeavour to repress the exclamation which rose; he suc-

ceeded, but could not help a low sound in his chest. But they were so busy crowding round and talking they did not hear it.

“I can’t see him.”

“He’s not there.”

“He may be hidden behind the stone-heaps. There’s a lot of nettles down there,” said Crassus.

“Yes,” said another, and struck at the nettles by Bevis, cutting down three or four with his sword.

“Anyhow,” said Crassus, “we’re sure to have him, he can’t get away; and Mark’s a mile off by this time.”

“Look sharp then; let’s go down and hunt round the stone-heaps.”

“There’s the old oak,” said some one; “it’s hollow; perhaps he’s in that.”

“Let’s look in the oak as we go round to get down, and then behind the stones. Are there any caves?”

“I don’t know,” said Crassus. “Very likely. We’ll see. March.”

They moved along to the left; Bevis opened his eyes, and saw the sting and its sheath left sticking in his hand. He drew it out, waited a moment, and then peered out again from the brambles. Crassus and the cohort were going towards the old hollow

oak, which stood not far from the quarry on low ground by the shore of the New Sea, so that their backs were towards him. Bevis stood out for a second to try and see Mark. There was not a sign of him, the field was quite deserted, and he remembered that Crassus had said Mark was a mile away. "The battle's lost," said Bevis to himself. "Mark has fled, and Pompey's after him, and they'll have me in a minute."

He darted down the slope into the hollow which concealed him for the time, and gave him a chance to think. "If I go out on the Plain they'll see me," he said to himself; "if I run to the firs I must cross the open first; if I hide behind the stones, they're coming to look. What shall I do? The New Sea's that side, and I can't. O!"

He was over the bank and on the shore in a moment. The jutting point was rather higher than the rest of the ground there, and hid him for a minute. He put his left knee on the punt, and pushed hard with his right foot. The heavy punt, already loosened by the waves, yielded, moved, slid off the sand, and floated. He drew his other knee on, crept down on the bottom of the punt, and covered himself with two sacks, which were intended to hold sand. He was, too, partly under the seat,

which was broad. The impetus of his push off and the wind and waves carried the punt out, and it was already fifteen or twenty yards from the land when Crassus and his men appeared.

CHAPTER II.

THE BATTLE CONTINUED—MARK ANTONY.

THEY had found the oak empty, and were returning along the shore to search the quarry. The wind brought their voices out over the water.

“Mind, he’ll fight if he’s there.”

“Pooh! we’re ten to one.”

“Well, he hits hard.”

“And he can run. We shall have to catch him when we find him; he can run like a hare.”

“Look!”

“The punt’s loose.”

“So it is.”

“Serves the old rascal right. Hope it will sink.”

“It’s sure to sink in those big waves,” said Crassus. “Come on,” and down he went into the quarry, where they looked behind the stone heaps and every place they could think of, in vain. Next some one said that perhaps even now Bevis might

be in the sycamores, up in the boughs, so they went there and looked, and actually pushed a soldier up into one tree to see the better. After which they went down to the lower ground and searched along the nut-tree hedge, some one side, some another, and two up in the mound itself.

“Wherever *can* he be?” said Crassus. “It’s extraordinary. And Pompey, too.”

“Both of them nowhere.”

“I can’t make it out. Thrust your sword into those ferns.” So they continued hunting the hedge.

Now the way Val Crassus and his cohort came to hunt for Cæsar Bevis was like this: At the moment when Pompey pounced on Cæsar, the rest of the Pompeians, a little way off, were scattering before Mark Antony and Scipio Cecil, who had attacked them front and rear. Mark Antony, though he had (to him unaccountably) missed Ted, saw the eagle which he had lost before him, and, calling to Cecil, pursued with fury. So terrific was their onslaught, especially as Scipio’s cohort was quite fresh, that the Pompeians gave way and ran, not knowing where their general was, and some believing they had seen him fly the combat. This pursuit continued for a good distance, almost down to the group of elms to

which Bevis and Mark used to run when they came out from their bath.

As the Pompeians ran, Val Crassus, driven along by the throng, caught his foot against one who had tumbled, and fell. When he got up he found the rest had gone on and left him behind with several stragglers who had escaped at the side of the crowd. As he stood, dubious what to do, and looking round for Pompey, several more stragglers gathered about him, till by-and-by he had a detachment. Still he was uncertain what to do, whether to go after Mark and endeavour to check the rout, or whether to stay there and rally the Pompeians, if possible, to him.

By this time the fugitives, with Antony and Scipio hot on their rear, had gone through the gate to which the hollow way or waggon-track led, and were out of sight. Val Crassus moved towards the rising ground to view what happened in the meadows beyond, when two Pompeians came running to him, and said that Pompey had got Cæsar Bevis prisoner.

These were the two who had been hoisted up into the sycamore-tree, at Pompey's order, to slash down at the four defenders. So long as Bevis stood there afterwards watching Scipio drive his recent assailants

away, they dared not descend. They had seen Bevis fight like a paladin; and though he was alone they dared not come down. But when Pompey pounced on him, and they went fencing at each other, past the tree, and some distance, they slipped out of the tree, which was very large, but equally short, so that they had not half the depth to fall that Charlie had.

They dreaded to go near the two leaders, for the moment, but watched the main fight, and hesitated to go near it, too, as their friends were in distress. When they turned, Pompey and Cæsar were both gone: they looked the other way, and the Pompeians were in full flight. They hid for a few minutes in the bowl-like hollow, where the moor-cock was cooked; and when they ventured to peep out, saw Val Crassus, with the soldiers who had rallied around him. They ran to him with the story of Cæsar's capture, and that Ted was holding him, and could but just manage it.

Val Crassus immediately hastened to the sycamores, but when he arrived, found no one, for Pompey had fled, and Bevis was on the flake. Val turned angrily on the two who had brought him this intelligence, but they maintained their story, and being now in for it, added various other par-

ticulars ; how Cæsar had got up once, and how Ted pulled him down again, so that, most likely, Bevis had got away again, and Ted was chasing him.

Crassus shouted, but received no answer ; then he went through the firs, and came back to the sycamores, and next to the quarry, where he stood within a yard or two of Bevis without seeing him. Unable to discover either Pompey or Bevis, Crassus was now minutely searching the broad mound of the nut-tree hedge.

While he had been thus engaged, Antony and Scipio followed close in the rear of the fugitives across two meadows, Mark forgetting Bevis in his eagerness to recover his standard. As they ran, presently Phil Varro stopped, sat down on the grass, and was instantly taken prisoner. He was short and stout and so overcome with his exertions that he could make no resistance, as they tied his hands behind him.

Antony still continued to pursue, shouting to the soldier with the eagle to surrender. He did not do so, but, looking back and seeing Varro taken, threw it down, the better to escape. So Antony recovered it, and at last, pausing, found himself alone, having outstripped all the rest. He now returned to where Varro was prisoner, and Scipio Cecil came up with

another eagle, which he had taken, and which had been carried before Phil Varro.

“Hurrah!” shouted Mark, sitting down to recover breath; and they all rested a minute or two.

“Wreaths!” said Cecil, panting. “Wreaths for the victors!”

“How many did you have made?”

“Two or three. Hurrah! we’ll put them on presently.”

“Where’s Bevis?” said Mark, as he got over his running.

“I haven’t seen him,” said Cecil.

“Nor I!”

“It’s curious.”

“Have you seen him?”—to the others.

“Not for a long time.”

“No—nor Pompey.” Every one remarked on the singular absence of the two leaders.

“Crassus,” said Mark. “Bevis is hunting Crassus and Pompey: that’s it. Come on. Let’s help. March.”

He marched along the winding hedge-row towards the Plain, and, turning round a corner, presently came to the gate in the nut-tree mound just as Crassus, who had been searching it, opened the gate.

“Charge!” shouted Mark, and they dashed on

the Pompeians. Crassus drew back, but before he could get quite through, Mark jammed him with the gate, between the gate and the post.

"Fred! Bill!" For Crassus struggled, and was very strong. Bill rushed to Mark's assistance: together they squeezed Val tight.

"O! My side! You dogs!" Crassus hit at them with his sword: they pressed him harder.

"Give in," said Bill. "You're caught—give in."

"I shan't," gasped Val. "If I could only reach you,"—he hit viciously, but they were just an inch or two beyond his arm.

"Charge, Cecil!—Scipio, charge!" shouted Mark. Scipio had charged already, and the Pompeians, being divided into three parties, one on each side of the mound, and the third up in it, were easily scattered. Scipio himself found their eagle in the brambles, where the bearer had left it, as he jumped out of the hedge to run.

"Yield," said Bill. "Give in—we've got your eagle."

"All the eagles," said Scipio, returning. "Every one—our two and Pompey's two."

"And Varro's a prisoner—there he is," said Mark. "Give in, Val."

“ I won’t. Let me out. Come near and hit then. If I could get at you ! ”

“ But you can’t ! ”

“ O ! ”—as they pressed him.

“ Give in ! ”

“ No ! Not if I’m squashed :—no, that I won’t,” said Val, frantically struggling.

“ What’s the use ? ” said Scipio. “ You may just as well—the battle’s won, and it’s no use your fighting.”

“ Where’s Pompey ? ” asked Val Crassus.

“ Run away,” said Mark promptly.

“ Then where’s Bevis ? ”

“ After him of course,” said Mark.

“ I don’t believe it ; did any one see Pompey run ? Phil, did you ? ”—to the prisoner.

“ Don’t know,” said Varro, sullenly. “ Don’t care. If he had done as I said he would have won. Yes, I saw him leave the fight.”

“ Now will you give in ? ” said Mark. “ Or must we chop you till you do.”

“ Chop away,” said Val defiantly.

“ Don’t hit him,” said Scipio. “ Val, really it’s no good, you’ve lost the battle.”

“ I suppose we have,” said Val. “ Well, let some one take Varro on the hill, and let him tell me if he can see Pompey anywhere.”

They did so. Cecil and three others as guards took Varro on the rising ground; Varro was obliged to own that Pompey was not in sight.

"Take it then," said Crassus, hurling his sword at them. "Well, I never thought Ted would have run. If he had not, I would not have given in for fifty of you."

"But he did run," said Mark, unable to suppress his joy.

"You won't tie me," said Crassus, as they let him out. Mark did not tie him, and then as they were now ten to one they loosened Varro too. Mark led them up on the higher ground towards the sycamores, fully expecting to see Bevis every moment. When he got there, and could not see him anywhere, he could not understand it. Then Crassus told him of the search he had made. Mark went to the quarry and looked down—no one was there. He halted while two of his men ran through the firs shouting, but of course came back unsuccessful.

"I know," said Scipio, "he's gone to the camp."

"Of course," said Mark. "How stupid of us—of course he's at the camp. Let him see us come properly. Two and two, now—prisoners two and two half-way down, that's it. Eagles in front. Right. March."

He marched, with Scipio beside him, the four eagles behind, and the prisoners in the centre. Never was there a prouder general than Mark at that moment. He had captured both the enemy's eagles, recovered his own, and taken Pompey's lieutenants captive. Pompey himself and all his soldiers had fled: looking round the Plain there was not one in sight. Mark Antony was in sole possession of the battlefield. Proudly he marched, passing every now and then broken swords on the ground, and noticing the trampled grass where fierce combats had occurred. How delighted Bevis would be to see him! How he looked forward to Bevis's triumph! All his heart was full of Bevis, it was not his own success, it was Bevis's victory that he rejoiced in.

"Bevis! Bevis!" he shouted, as they came near the camp, but there was no answer. When they entered the camp, and found the fire still smouldering, but no Bevis, Mark's face became troubled. The triumph faded away, he grew anxious.

"Where ever can he be?" he said. "I hope there's nothing wrong. Bevis!" shouting at the top of his voice. The gale took the shout with it, but nothing came but the roaring of the wind. The sun was now sinking and cast a purple gleam over the grass.

CHAPTER III.

BEVIS IN THE STORM.

IN the punt Bevis remained quite still under the sacks while Crassus searched the quarry for him, then looked up in the sycamores, and afterwards went to the hazel hedge. Bevis, peeping out from under the broad seat, saw him go there, and knew that he could not see over the New Sea from the lower ground, but as others might at any moment come on the hill, he considered it best to keep on the bottom of the boat. The punt at first floated slowly, and was sheltered by the jutting point, but still the flow of the water carried it out, and in a little time the wind pushed it more strongly as it got farther from shore. Presently it began to roll with the waves, and Bevis soon found some of the inconveniences of a flat-bottomed vessel.

The old punt always leaked, and the puntsman being too idle to bale till compelled, the space

between the real and the false bottom was full of water. As she began to roll this water went with a sound like "swish" from side to side, and Bevis saw it appear between the edge of the boards and the side. When she had drifted quite out of the gulf and met the full force of the waves every time they lifted her, this bilgewater rushed out over the floor. Bevis was obliged to change his position, else he would soon have been wet through. He doubled up the two sacks and sat on them, reclining his arms on the seat so as still to be as low down and as much concealed as possible.

This precaution was really needless, for both the armies were scattered, the one pursuing and the other pursued, in places where they could not see him, and even had they moved by the shore they would never have thought of looking for him where he was. He could not know this, and so sat on the sacks. The punt was now in the centre of the storm, and the waves seemed immense to Bevis. Between them the surface was dark, their tops were crested with foam, which the wind blew off against him, so that he had to look in the direction he was going and not back to escape the constant shower of scud in his face.

Now up, now down, the boat heaved and sank,

turning slowly round as she went, but generally broadside on. With such a hurricane and such waves she floated fast, and the shore was already far behind. When Bevis felt that he was really out on the New Sea a wild delight possessed him. He shouted and sang how—

“Estmere threw his harpe asyde,
And swith he drew his brand!”

The dash of the waves, the “wish” of the gust as it struck him, the flying foam, the fury of the storm, the red sun almost level with the horizon and towards which he drifted, the dark heaving waters in their wrath lifted his spirit to meet them. All he wished was that Mark was with him to share the pleasure. He was now in the broadest part of the New Sea where the rollers having come so far rose yet higher. Bevis shouted to them, wild as the waves.

The punt being so cumbrous and heavy did not rise buoyantly as the waves went under, but hung on them, so that the crests of the larger waves frequently broke over the gunwale and poured a flood of water on board. There were crevices too in her sides, which in ordinary times were not noticed, as she was never loaded deep enough to bring them down

to the water-line. But now the waves rising above these found out the chinks, and rushed through in narrow streams.

The increase of the water in the punt again forced Bevis to move, and he sat up on the seat with his feet on the sacks. The water was quite three inches above the false bottom, and rushed from side to side with a great splash, of course helping to heel her over. Bevis did not like this at all; he ceased singing, and looked about him.

It seemed a mile (it was not so far) back to the quarry, such a waste of raging waves and foam! On either side the shore was a long, long way, he could not swim a tenth as far. He recognized the sedges where he and Mark had wandered on his left, and found that he was rapidly coming near the two islands. He began to grow anxious, thinking that the boat would not keep afloat very much longer. The shore in front beyond the islands was a great way, and from what he knew of it he believed it was encumbered far out with weeds through which, if the punt foundered, he could not swim, so that his hope was that she would strike either the Unknown Island or Serendib.

Both were now near, and he tried to discover whether the current and wind would throw him on

them. A long white streak parallel to the course of the storm marked the surface of the water rising and falling with the waves like a ribbon, and this seemed to pass close by Serendib. The punt being nearly on the streak he hoped he should get there. If he only had something to row with ! The Old Man of the Sea had hidden the sculls, and had not troubled to bring the movable seat with him, as he did not want it. The movable seat would have made a good paddle. As for the stretcher it was fixed, nailed to the floor.

He could do nothing paddling with his hand, in calm weather he might, but not in such a storm of wind. If he only had something to paddle with he could have worked the punt into the line so as to strike on Serendib. As it was he could do nothing ; if he had only had his hat he could have baled out some of the water, which continued to rise higher.

Drifting as the waves chose he saw that Serendib was a low, flat island. The Unknown Island rose into a steep sand bluff at that end which faced him. Against this bluff the waves broke with tremendous fury, sending the spray up to the bushes on the top. Bevis watched to see where the punt would ground, or whether it would miss both islands and drift through the narrow channel between them.

He still thought it might hit Serendib, when it once more rotated, and that brought it in such a position that the waves must take it crash against the low steep cliff of the Unknown Island. Bevis set his teeth, and prepared to dig his nails into the sand, when just as the punt was within three waves of the shore, it seemed to pause. This was the reflux—the under tow, the water recoiling from the bank—so that the boat for half a moment was suspended or held between the two forces.

Before he had time to think what was best to do the punt partly swung round, and the rush of the current, setting between the islands, carried it along close beside the shore. The bluff now sloped, and the waves rushed up among the bushes and trees. Bevis watched, saw a chance, and in an instant stepped on the seat, and leaped with all his might. It was a long way, but he was a good jumper, and his feet landed on the ground. He would even then have fallen back into the water had he not grasped a branch of alder.

For a moment he hung over the waves, the next he drew himself up, and was safe. He stepped back from the edge, and instinctively put his left arm round the alder trunk, as if clinging to a friend. Leaning against the tree he saw the punt, pushed

out by the impetus from his spring, swing round and drift rapidly between the islands. It went some distance, and then began to settle, and slowly sank.

Bevis remained holding the tree till he had recovered himself, then he moved farther into the island, and went a little way up the bluff, whence he saw that the sun had set. He soon forgot his alarm, and as that subsided began to enjoy his position. "What a pity Mark was not with me!" he said to himself. "I am so sorry. Only think, I'm really shipwrecked. It's splendid!" He kicked up his heels, and a startled blackbird flew out of a bramble bush and across the water.

Bevis watched him fly aslant the gale till he lost sight of him in the trees on shore. Looking that way—north-west—his quick eyes found out a curious thing. On that side of the island there was a broad band of weeds stretching towards the shore, and widening the farther it extended.

These weeds were level with the surface, and as the waves rolled under they undulated like a loose green carpet lifted by a strong draught. As they proceeded the undulations became less and less, till on emerging into an open channel on the other side of the weeds, they were nothing more than slow

ripples. Still passing on the slow ripples gently crossed, and were lost in a second band of weeds. He could hear the boom of the waves as they struck the low cliff and dashed themselves to pieces, yet these furious waves were subdued by the leaves and stalks of the weeds, any of which he knew he could pull up with his hand.

Watching the green undulations he looked farther and saw that at some distance from the island there were banks covered with sedges, and the channel between the weeds (showing deeper water) wound in among these. Next he went up on the top of the cliff, and found a young oak-tree growing on the summit, to which he held while thus exposed to the full strength of the wind, and every now and then the spray flew up and sprinkled him.

Shading his eyes with his hand, for the wind seemed to hurt them, he looked towards the quarry, which appeared yellow at this distance. He saw a group of people, as he supposed Pompey's victorious army, passing by the sycamores.

"It's no use, Ted," he said to himself, "you can't find me, and you can't win. I've done you."

The group was really Mark and the rest searching for him. After a while they went over the hill, and Bevis could not see them.

Bevis came down from the cliff, and thought he would see how large the island was, so he went all round it, as near the edge as he could. It was covered with wood, and there were the thickest masses of bramble he had ever seen. He had to find a way round these, so that it took him some time to get along. Some firs too obstructed his path, and he found one very tall spruce. At last he reached the other extremity, where the ground was low, and only just above the water, which was nearly smooth there, being sheltered by the projecting irregularities of the shore.

Returning he had in one place to climb over quantities of stones, for the bank just there was steeper, and presently compelled him to go more inland. The island seemed very large, in shape narrow and long, but so thickly overgrown with bushes and trees that he could not see across it. The surface was uneven, for he went down into a hollow which seemed beneath the level of the water, and afterwards came to a steep bank, on rounding which he was close to the place from which he started.

Not having had anything to eat since dinner (for they shirked their tea), and having gone through all these labours, Bevis began to feel hungry, but

there was nothing to eat on his island, for the berries were not yet ripe. First he whistled, then he wished Mark would come, then he walked up to the cliff and climbed into the oak on the summit.

“Mark is sure to come,” he said to himself. Just then he saw the full moon, which had risen above the distant hills, and shining over the battle-field touched the raging waves with tarnished silver.

He looked at the great round shield on which the heraldic markings were dimmed by its own gleam. He almost fancied he could see it move, so rapidly did it sweep upwards. It was clear and bright as if wind-swept, as if the hurricane had brushed it. Bevis watched it a little while, and then he thought of Mark. The possibility that Mark would not know where he was never entered his mind, nor did it occur to him that perhaps even Mark would hesitate to venture out in such a tempest of wind: so strong was his faith in his companion.

The wind blew so hard up in the tree, he presently got down, and descended the slope till the ridge sheltered him. He sat on the rough grass, put his hands in his pockets, and whistled again to assure himself that he liked it. But he was hungry,

and the time seemed very slow, and he could not quite suppress an inward feeling that shipwreck when one was quite alone was not altogether so splendid. It was so dull.

He got up, picked up some stones, and threw them into the shadowy bushes, just for something to do. They fell with a crash, and one or two birds fluttered away. He wished he had his knife to cut and whittle a stick. He thought he would make up his mind to go to sleep, and extended himself on the ground, when, looking up as he lay on his back, he saw there were stars. Not in the least sleepy, up he jumped again.

“Kaack! kaack!” like an immensely exaggerated and prolonged “quack” without the “qu;” a harsh shriek resounding over the water even above the gale.

“A heron,” thought Bevis. “If I only had a gun, or my bow now.” He took a stone, and peered out over the water on the side the cry came from, which was where the weeds were. The surface was dim and shadowy in that direction, and he could not see the heron. He returned and sat down on the grass. He could not think of anything to do, till at last he resolved to build a hut of branches, as shipwrecked people did. But when he

came to pull at the alder branches, those of any size were too tough ; the aspen were too high up ; the firs too small.

“ Stupid,” he said to himself. “ This *is* stupid.” Once more he returned to the foot of the slope, and sat down on the grass.

Before him there were the shadowy trees and bushes, and behind he could hear the boom of the waves, yet it never occurred to him how weird the place was. All he wanted was to be at something. “ Why ever doesn’t Mark come ? ” he repeated to himself. Just then he chanced to put his hand in his jacket-pocket, and instantly jumped up delighted. “ Matches ! ” He took out the box, which he had used to light the camp-fire, and immediately set about gathering materials for a fire. “ The proper thing to do,” he thought. “ The very thing ! ”

He soon began to make a pile of dead wood, when he stopped, and, lifting the bundle in his arms, carried it up the slope nearly to the top of the cliff, where he put it down behind a bramble-bush. He thought that if he made the fire on the height it would be a guide to Mark, but down in the hollow no one could see it. To get together enough sticks took some time ; for the moon, though full and bright

only gave light where the beams fell direct. In the shadow he could hardly see at all.

Having arranged the pile, and put all the larger sticks on one side, ready to throw on presently, he put some dry leaves and grass underneath, as he had no straw or paper, struck a match and held it to them. Some of the leaves smouldered, one crackled, and the dry grass lit a little, but only just where it was in contact with the flame of the match. The same thing happened with ten matches, one after the other. The flame would not spread. Bevis on his knees thought a good while, and then he set to work and gathered some more leaves, dry grass, and some thin chips of dry bark. Then he took out the sliding drawer of the match-box, and placed it under these, as the deal of which it was made would burn like paper. The outer case he was careful to preserve, because they were safety matches, and lit only on the prepared surface.

In and around the little drawer he arranged half-a-dozen matches, and then lit them, putting the rest in his pocket. The flame caught the deal, which was as thin as a wafer, then the bark and tiny twigs, then the dry grass and larger sticks. It crept up through the pile, crackling and hissing. In three minutes it had hold of the boughs, curling its lam-

bent point round them, as a cow licks up the grass with her tongue. The bramble bush sheltered it from the gale, but let enough wind through to cause a draught.

Up sprang the flames, and the bonfire began to cast out heat, and red light flickering on the trees. Bevis threw on more branches, the fire flared up and gleamed afar on the wet green carpet of undulating weeds. He hauled up a fallen pole, the sparks rose as he hurled it on.

“Hurrah!” shouted Bevis, dancing and singing:—

“Kyng Estmere threwe his harpe asyde,
And swith he drew his brand;
And Estmere he, and Adler yonge,
Right stiffe in stour can stand!”

“Adler will be here in a minute.” He meant Mark.

CHAPTER IV.

MARK IS PUT IN PRISON.

BUT Adler was himself in trouble. After they had waited some time in the camp, thinking that Bevis would be certain to return there sooner or later, finding that he did not come, the whole party, with Mark at their head, searched and re-searched the battlefield and most of the adjacent meadows, not overlooking the copse. Mark next ran home, hoping that Bevis for some reason or other might have gone there, and asked himself whether he had offended him in any way, and was that why he had left the fight? But he could not recollect that he had done anything.

Bevis, of course, was not at home, and Mark returned to the battlefield, every minute now adding to his anxiety. It was so unlike Bevis that he felt sure something must be wrong.

“Perhaps he’s drowned,” said Val.

“Drowned,” repeated Mark, with intense contempt; “why he can swim fifty yards.”

Fifty yards is not far, but it would be far enough to save life on many occasions. Val was silenced, still Mark, to be certain, went along the shore, and even some way up the Nile. By now the others had left, one at a time, and only Val, Cecil, and Charlie remained.

The four hunted again, then they walked slowly across the field, trying to think. Mark picked up Bevis’s hat, which had fallen off in the battle; but to find Bevis’s hat was nothing, for he had a knack of leaving it behind him.

“Perhaps he’s gone to your place,” said Charlie, meaning Mark’s home.

Mark shook his head. “But I wish you would go and see,” he said; he dared not face Frances.

“So I will,” said Charlie, always ready to do his best, and off he went.

Charlie’s idea gave rise to another, that Bevis might be gone to Jack’s home in the Downs, and Val offered to go and inquire, though it was a long, long walk.

He set out, Cecil went with him, and Mark, left to himself, walked slowly home, hoping once more Bevis might have returned. As he came in with

Bevis's hat in his hand, the servants pounced upon him. Bevis was missed, there had been a great outcry, and all the people were inquiring for him. Several had come to the kitchen to gossip about it. The uproar would not have been so great so soon but it had got out that there had been a battle.

"You said it was a picnic," said Polly, shaking Mark.

"You told I so," said the Bailiff, seizing his collar.

"Let me go," shouted Mark, punching.

"Well, what have you done with him? Where is he?"

Mark could not tell, and between them, four or five to one, they hustled him into the cellar.

"You must go to gaol," said the Bailiff grimly. "Bide there a bit."

"How can you find Bevis without me!" shouted Mark, who had just admitted he did not know where Bevis was. But the Bailiff pushed him stumbling down the three stone steps, and he heard the bolt grate in the staple. Thus the general who had just won a great battle was thrust ignominiously into a cellar.

Mark kicked and banged the door, but it was of solid oak, without so much as a panel to weaken it,

and though it resounded it did not even shake. He yelled till he was hoarse, and hit the door till his fists became numbed. Then suddenly he sat down quite quiet on the stone steps, and the tears came into his eyes. He did not care for the cellar, it was about Bevis—Bevis was lost somewhere and wanted him, and he *must* go to Bevis.

Dashing the tears away, up he jumped, and looked round to see if he could find anything to burst the door open. There was but one window, deep set in the thick wall, with an iron upright bar inside. The glass was yellowish-green, in small panes, and covered with cobwebs, so that the light was very dim. He could see the barrels, large and small, and as his eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness some meat—a joint—and vegetables on a shelf, placed there for coolness. Out came his pocket-knife, and he attacked the joint savagely, slashing off slices anyhow, for he (like Bevis) was hungry, and so angry he did not care what he did.

As he ate he still looked round and round the cellar and peered into the corners, but saw nothing, though something moved in the shadow on the floor, no doubt a resident toad. Mark knew the cellar perfectly, and he had often seen tools in it, as a hammer, used in tapping the barrels, but though

he tried hard he could not find it. It must have been taken away for some purpose. He stamped on the stone floor, and heard a rustle as a startled mouse rushed into its hole.

The light just then seemed to increase, and turning towards the window he saw the full round moon. As it crossed the narrow window the shadow of the iron bar fell on the opposite wall, then moved aside, and in a very few minutes the moon began to disappear as she swept up into the sky. He watched the bright shield still himself for awhile, then as he looked down he thought of the iron bar, and out came his knife again.

The bar was not let into the stonework, the window recess inside was encased with wood, and the bar, flattened at each end, was fastened with three screws. Mark endeavoured to unscrew these, he quickly broke the point of his knife, and soon had nothing but a stump left. The stump answered better than the complete blade, and he presently got the screws out. He then worked the bar to and fro with such violence that he wrenched the top screws clean away from the wood there. But just as he lifted the bar to smash all the panes and get out, he saw that the frame was far too narrow for him to pass through.

Inside the recess was wide enough, but it was not half so broad where the glass was. The bar was really unnecessary ; no one could have got in or out, and perhaps that was why it had been so insecurely fastened, as the workmen could hardly have helped seeing it was needless.

Mark hurled the bar to the other end of the cellar, where it knocked some plaster off the wall, then fell on an earthenware vessel used to keep vegetables in, and cracked it. He stamped up and down the cellar, and in his bitter and desperate anger, had half a mind to set all the taps running for spite.

“Let me out,” he yelled, thumping the door with all his might. “Let me out ; you’ve no business to put me in here. If the governor was at home, I know he wouldn’t, and you’re beasts—you’re *beasts*.”

He was right in so far that the governor would not have locked him in the cellar ; but the governor was out that evening, and Bevis’s mamma, so soon as she found he was missing, had had the horse put in the dog-cart, and went to fetch him. So Mark fell into the hands of the merciless. No one even heard him howling and bawling and kicking the heart of oak, and when he had exhausted himself he sat down again on a wooden frame made to support a cask.

Presently he went to the door once more, and shouted through the keyhole, "Tell me if you have found Bevis!"

There was no answer. He waited, and then sat down on the frame, and asked himself if he could get up through the roof. By standing on the top of the largest cask he thought he could touch the rafters, but no more, and he had no tool to cut his way through with. "I know," he said suddenly, "I'll smash the lock." He searched for the iron bar, and found it in the earthenware vessel.

He hit the lock a tremendous bang, then stopped, and began to examine it more carefully. His eyes were now used to the dim light, and he could see almost as well as by day, and he found that the great bolt of the lock, quite three inches thick, shot into an open staple driven into the door-post, a staple much like those used to fasten chains to.

In a minute he had the end of the iron bar inside the staple. The staple was strong, and driven deep into the oaken post, but he had a great leverage on it. The bar bent, but the staple came slowly, then easier, and presently fell on the stones. The door immediately swung open towards him.

Mark dashed out with the bar in his hand, fully determined to knock any one down who got in his

way, but they were all in the road, and he reached the meadow. He dropped the bar, and ran for the battlefield. Going through the gate that opened on the New Sea, something pushed through beside him against his ankles. It would have startled him, but he saw directly it was Pan. The spaniel had followed him: it may be with some intelligence that he was looking for his master.

“Pan! Pan!” said Mark, stooping to stroke him, and delighted to get some sympathy at last. “Come on.”

Together they raced to the battlefield.

Then from the high ground Mark saw the beacon on the island, and instantly knew it was Bevis. He never doubted it for a moment. He looked at the beacon, and saw the flames shoot up, sink, and rise again; then he ran back as fast as he could to the head of the water, where the boats were moored in the sandy corner. Fetching the sculls from the tumbling shed where they were kept, he pushed off in the blue boat which they were fitting up for sailing, never dreaming that the first voyage in it would be like this. Pan jumped in with him.

In his haste, not looking where he was going, he rowed into the weeds, and was some time getting out, for the stalks clung to the blade of the scull as

if an invisible creature in the water were holding it. Soon after he got free he reached the waves, and in five minutes, coming out into the open channel, the boat began to dance up and down. With wind and wave and oar he drove along at a rapid pace, past the oak where the council had been held, past the jutting point, and into the broad waters, where he could see the beacon, if he glanced over his shoulder.

The boat now pitched furiously, as it seemed to him rising almost straight up, and dipping as if she would dive into the deep. But she always rose again, and after her came the wave she had surmounted rolling with a hiss and bubble eager to overtake him. The crest blew off like a shower in his face, and just as the following roller seemed about to break into the stern sheets it sank. Still the wave always came after him, row as hard as he would, like vengeance, black, dire, and sleepless.

Lit up by the full moon, the raging waters rushed and foamed and gleamed around him. Though he afterwards saw tempests on the ocean, the waves never seemed so high and so threatening as they did that night, alone in the little boat. The storms, indeed, on inland waters are full of dangers, perhaps more so than the long heaving billows of the sea, for

the waves seem to have scarcely any interval between, racing quick, short and steep, one after the other.

This great black wave—for it looked always the same—chased him eagerly, overhanging the stern. Pan sat there on the bottom as it looked under the wave. Mark rowed his hardest, trying to get away from it. Hissing, foaming, with the rush and roar of the wind, the wave ran after. When he ventured to look round he was close to the islands, so quickly had he travelled.

Bevis was standing on the summit of the cliff with a long stick burning at the end in his hand. He held it out straight like the arm of a signal, then waved it a little, but kept it pointing in the same direction. He was shouting his loudest, to direct Mark, who could not hear a sound, but easily guessed that he meant him to bear the way he pointed. Mark pulled a few strokes and looked again, and saw the white spray rushing up the cliff, though he could not hear the noise of the surge.

Bevis was frantically waving the burning brand; Mark understood now, and pulled his left scull, hardest. The next minute the current setting between the islands seized the boat, and he was carried by as if on a mountain torrent. Everything seemed

to whirl past, and he saw the black wave that had followed him dashed to sparkling fragments against the cliff.

He was taken beyond the island before he could stay the boat, then he edged away out of the rush behind the land, where the water was much smoother, and was able presently to row back to it in the shelter. Bevis came out from the trees to meet him, and taking hold of the stem of the boat drew it ashore. Mark stepped out, and Pan, jumping on Bevis, barked round him.

Bevis told him how it had all happened, and danced with delight when he heard how Mark had won the battle, for he insisted that Mark had done it. They went to the beacon fire, and then Mark, now his first joy was over, began to grumble because Bevis had been really shipwrecked and he had not. He wished he had smashed his boat against the cliff now. Bevis said they could have another great shipwreck soon. Mark wanted to stop all night on the island, but Bevis was hungry.

“And besides,” said he, “there’s the governor; he will be awfully frightened about us, and he ought to know.”

“So he did,” said Mark. “Very well; but, mind, there is to be a jolly shipwreck.”

Scamps as they were, they both disliked to give pain to those who loved them. It was the knowledge that the governor would never have put him in the cellar that stopped Mark from the spiteful trick of turning on the taps. Bevis was exceedingly angry about Mark having been locked up. He stamped his foot, and said the Bailiff should know.

They got into the boat, and each took a scull, but when they were afloat they paused, for it occurred to both at once that they could not row back in the teeth of the storm.

"We shall have to stop on the island now," said Mark, not at all sorry. Bevis, however, remembered the floating breakwater of weeds, and the winding channel on that side, and told Mark about it. So they rowed between the weeds, and so much were the waves weakened that the boat barely rocked. Now the boat was steady, Pan sat in front, and peered over the stem like a figure-head. Presently they came to the sand or mudbanks where the water was quite smooth, and here the heron rose up.

"We ought to have a gun," said Bevis; "it's a shame we haven't got a gun."

"Just as if we didn't know how to shoot," said Mark indignantly.

“Just as if,” echoed Bevis; “but we will have one, somehow.”

The boat as he spoke grounded on a shallow; they got her off, but she soon grounded again, and it took them quite three quarters of an hour to find the channel, so much did it turn and wind. At last they were stopped by thick masses of weeds, and a great bunch of the reed-mace, often called bulrushes, and decided to land on the sandbank. They hauled the boat so far up on the shore that she could not possibly get loose, and then walked to the mainland.

There the bushes and bramble thickets again gave them much trouble, but they contrived to get through into the wildest-looking field they had ever seen. It was covered with hawthorn-trees, bunches of thistles, bramble bushes, rushes, and numbers of green ant-hills, almost as high as their knees. Skirting this, as they wound in and out the ant-hills, they startled some peewits, which rose with their curious whistle, and two or three white tails, which they knew to be rabbits, disappeared round the thistles.

It took them some time to cross this field; the next was barley, very short; the next wheat, and then clover; and at last they reached the head of the water, and got into the meadows. Thence it was

only a short way home, and they could see the house illuminated by the moonlight.

The authorities were wroth, though secretly glad to see them. Nothing was said ; the wrath was too deep for reproaches. They were ordered to bed that instant. They did not dare disobey, but Mark darted a savage look, and Bevis shouted back from the top of the staircase that he was hungry. "Be off, sir," was the only reply. Sullenly they went into their room and sat down. Five minutes afterwards some one opened the door a little way, put in a plate and a jug, and went away. On the plate were three huge slices of bread, and in the jug cold water.

"I won't touch it," said Bevis ; "it's hateful."

"It's hateful," said Mark.

"After we came home to tell them, too," said Bevis. "Horrid !"

But by-and-by his hunger overcame him ; he ate two of the huge slices, and Mark the other. Then after a draught of the cold water, they undressed, and fell asleep, quick and calm, just as Aurora was beginning to show her white foot in the East.

CHAPTER V.

IN DISGRACE—VISIT TO JACK'S.

“As if we were dogs,” said Bevis indignantly.

“Just as if,” said Mark. “It’s hateful. And after coming home from the island to tell them.”

“All that trouble.”

“I could have brought you some stuff to eat,” said Mark, “and we could have stopped there all night, quite jolly.”

“Hateful!”

They were in the blue painted summer-house the next day talking over the conduct of the authorities, whose manner was distant in the extreme. The governor was very angry. They thought it unjust after winning such a mighty victory, and actually coming home on purpose to save alarm.

“I do not like it at all,” said Bevis.

“Let’s go back to the island,” said Mark eagerly.

"They would come and look there for us the first thing," said Bevis. "I've a great mind to walk to Southampton, and see the ships. It's only sixty miles."

"Well, come on," said Mark, quite ready, "The road goes over the hills by Jack's. O! I know!"

"What is it?" for Mark had jumped up.

"Jack's got a rifle," said Mark. "He'll let us shoot. Let's go and stop with Jack."

"First-rate," said Bevis. "But how do you know he has a rifle? There wasn't one when I was there last—you mean the long gun."

"No, I don't; he's got a rifle. I know, because he told Frances. He tells Frances everything. Stupids always tell girls everything. Somebody wanted to sell it, and he bought it."

"Are you quite sure?" said Bevis, getting up.

"Quite."

"What sort is it?"

"A deer rifle."

"Come on."

Off they started without another word, and walked a mile in a great hurry, when they recollected that if they did not appear in the evening there would be a hunt for them.

"Just as if we were babies," said Mark.

“Such rubbish,” said Bevis. “But we won’t have any more such stuff and nonsense. Let’s find Charlie, and send him back with a message.”

They found him, and sent him home with a piece of paper, on which Bevis wrote, “We are gone to Jack’s, and we shall not be home to night.” It was quite an hour’s walk to Jack’s, whose house was in a narrow valley between two hills. Jack was away in the fields, but when he returned he showed them the rifle, a small, old-fashioned muzzle-loader, and they spent a long time handling it, and examining the smallest detail.

“Let’s have a shot,” said Bevis.

“Yes,” said Mark. “Now do, Jack.” They begged and teased and worried him, till he almost yielded. He thought perhaps Bevis’s governor would not like shooting, but on the other hand he knew Frances was fond of Bevis, and Mark was her brother, with whom, for various reasons, he wished to keep especially friendly. At last he said they would go and try and shoot a young rabbit, and took down his double-barrel.

They did not take any dogs, meaning to stalk the rabbits and shoot them sitting, as neither Mark nor Bevis could kill anything moving. Jack went down to some little enclosed meadows at the foot of the

Downs where the rabbits came out as the sun began to sink. Every now and then he made them wait while he crept forward and peered through gaps or over gates.

Presently he came quietly back from a gap by a hollow willow, and giving Bevis the gun (which he had hitherto carried himself, being very anxious lest an accident should happen), whispered to him that there were three young rabbits out in the grass.

“Aim at the shoulder,” said Jack, thinking Bevis might miss the head. “And be sure you don’t pull both triggers at once, and—I say—” But Bevis had started. Bevis stepped as noiselessly as a squirrel, and glancing carefully round the willow saw the rabbits’ ears pricked up in the grass. They had heard or seen him, but being so young were not much frightened, and soon resumed feeding.

He lifted the gun, which was somewhat heavy, having been converted from a muzzle-loader, and old guns were made heavier than is the custom now. One of the rabbits moving turned his back to him, so that he could not see the shoulder; the other was behind a bunch of grass; but in a minute the third moved, and Bevis aimed at him. The barrels would

not at first keep quite steady, the sight, just as he had got it on the rabbit, jumped aside or drooped, so that he had to try twice before he was satisfied.

"What a time he is," whispered Mark, when Bevis pulled the trigger, and they all ran forward. Jack jumped through the gap and picked up the rabbit, which was kicking in the grass. Bevis rubbed his shoulder and felt his collar-bone.

"Hurt?" said Jack, laughing. "Kicked? I was going to tell you only you were in such a hurry. You should have held the stock tight to your shoulder, then it would not kick. There, like this; now try."

Bevis took the gun and pressed it firm to his bruised shoulder.

"Got it tight?" said Jack. "Aim at that thistle, and try again."

"But he'll frighten the rabbits, and it's my turn," said Mark.

"All gone in," said Jack, "every one; you'll have to wait till they come out again. Shoot."

Bevis shot, and the thistle was shattered. It scarcely hurt him at all, it would not have done so in the least, only his shoulder was tender now.

"It's a very little rabbit," said Mark.

"That it's not," said Bevis. "How dare you say so?"

“It looks little.”

“The size of a kitten,” said Jack. “As sweet as a chicken,” he added, “when cooked, and as white. You shall have it to-morrow for dinner—just the right size to be nice ;” he saw that Bevis was rather inclined to be doubtful, and wished to reassure him. Jack was a huge, kind-hearted giant.

“Are you sure it will be nice ? ”

“The very thing,” said Jack, “if Mark can only shoot another just like it ; it wants two for a pudding.”

About half an hour afterwards Mark did shoot another, and then there was a long discussion as to which was the biggest, which could not be decided, for, in fact, being both about the same age, one could hardly be distinguished from the other, except that Mark's had a shot-hole in the ear, and Bevis's had not. On the way home a cloud of sparrows rose out of some wheat and settled on the hedge, and Bevis had a shot at these, bringing down three. Afterwards he missed a yellow-hammer that sat singing happily on a gate.

He wanted the yellow-hammer because it had so fine a colour. The yellow-hammer sang away while he aimed, repeating the same note, as he perched all of a heap, a little lump of feathers on the top bar.

The instant the flash came the bird flew, and as is its habit in starting drooped, and so was shielded by the top bar. The bar was scarred with shot, and a dozen pellets were buried in it; but the yellow-hammer was not hurt.

Mark was delighted that Bevis had missed. There was an elm near the garden, and up in it Mark, on the look-out for anything, spied a young thrush. He took steady aim, and down came the thrush. They were disposed to debate as to who had shot best, but Jack stopped it, and brought out the quoits. After they had played some time, and it was growing dusky, Ted entered the field.

"Halloa! Pompey," said Mark. "Pompey!"

"Pompey," said Jack, not understanding.

Ted walked straight up to Bevis.

"Where did you go," said Bevis, "after I fell over?"

"But aren't you angry?" said Ted.

"Angry—why?"

"Because I sent you over."

"But you didn't do it purposely."

"No, *that* I didn't," said Ted, with all his might.

From that moment they were better friends than they had ever been before, though it was some time before Ted could really believe that Bevis was not

angry about it. In fact, the idea had never entered Bevis's mind. Ted stopped with them to supper, and everything was explained to Jack, who was delighted with the battle, and could not hear enough about it. But they did not press Ted as to what had become of him, seeing how confused he was whenever the subject was approached.

Quite beside himself with terror and misery, poor Ted had pretended illness and remained in his room, refusing to see any one, and dreading every footstep and every knock at the door, lest it should be the constable come to arrest him. Towards the afternoon Val, who had already been down to Bevis's house and found he was all right, strolled up to see Pompey. Ted would not open the door even to him, and Val taunted him for being such a coward all that time after the battle. Still, Ted would not unlock it till Val happened to say that there was a row about the war, and Bevis had gone up to Jack's. Open came the door directly.

"Where's Bevis?" said Ted, grasping at Val's arm.

"At Jack's."

"Not killed?"

"Killed—no. How could he be killed?"

As soon as he understood that Bevis was really

alive, not even hurt, Ted started off, to Val's amazement, and never stopped till he entered the field where they were picking up the quoits as it grew too dark to play well. So Cæsar and Pompey sat down to supper very lovingly, and talked over Pharsalia. Big Jack made them tell him the story over and over again, and wished he could have taken part in the combat. Like Mark, too, he envied Bevis's real shipwreck. Now seeing Jack so interested they made use of his good-humour, and coaxed him till at last he promised to let them shoot with the rifle on the morrow in the evening, after he had finished in the fields.

All next day they rambled about the place, now in the garden, then in the orchard, then in the rick-yard or the stables, back again into the house, and up into the lumber-room at the top to see if they could find anything; down into the larder, where Jack's dear old mother did her best to surfeit them with cakes and wines, and all the good things she could think of, for they reminded her of Jack when he was a boy and, in a sense, manageable. As for Jack's old father, who was very old, he sat by himself in the parlour almost all day long, being too grim for anybody to approach.

He sat with his high hat on, aslant on his head,

and when he wanted anything knocked the table or the floor as chance directed with a thick stick. When he walked out, every one slipped aside and avoided him, hiding behind the ricks, and Jack's pointer slunk into his house, drooping his tail.

In the orchard Bevis and Mark squailed at the pears with short sticks. If they hit one it was bruised that side by the blow; then as it fell it had another good bump; but it is well known that such thumping only makes pears more juicy. Tired of this they walked down by the mill-pool, in which there were a few small trout, Jack's especial pets. The water was so clear that they could see the bottom of the pool for some distance; it looked very different to that of the New Sea below in the valley.

"We ought to have some of this water in our water-barrel when we go on our voyage," said Bevis. "It's clearer than the Nile."

"The water-barrel must be got ashore somehow when we have the shipwreck," said Mark, "or perhaps we shall not have any to drink."

They were rather inclined to have a swim in the pool, but did not know how Jack would like it, as he was so jealous of his trout, and angry if they were disturbed. They would have had a swim

though all the same, if the miller had not been looking over the hatch of his door. There he stood white and floury, blinking his eyes, and watching them.

“How anybody can be so stupid as to stand stock still, and stare, stare, stare, I can’t think,” said Mark, quite loud enough for the miller to hear. He did not smile nor stir; he did not even understand that he was meant; so sidelong a speech was beyond his comprehension. It would have needed very severe abuse indeed, hurled straight at his head, to have made him so much as lift his hand to dust the flour from his sleeve—the first thing he did when he began to feel a little.

Next they went indoors and had a look at the guns and rifle on the rack, which they dared not touch. Hearing the quick clatter of hoofs they ran out, and saw a labourer riding a pony bare back. He had been sent out to a village two miles away for some domestic requirement, and carried a parcel under his arm, while his heels but just escaped scraping the ground. The pony came up as sharp as he could, knowing his stable.

But no sooner was the labourer off, than Bevis was up, and forced him to go round the pasture below the house. When Bevis wearied, Mark

mounted, and so by turns they rode the pony round and round the field, making him leap a broad furrow, and gallop his hardest. By-and-by, as Bevis got off and Mark had put his hand on before he sprang up, the pony gave a snort and bolted, throwing up his heels as he flew for his stable.

Such an experience was new to him, and he was some time before he quite understood; so soon as he did, and found out into what hands he had fallen, the pony made use of the first opportunity. They followed, but he showed his heels so viciously they thought it best to let him alone; so hurling the sticks with which they had thrashed him round the field at his head, they turned away. After dinner they took to another game.

This was sliding down the steep down just behind the house, on a short piece of broad plank with a ridge in front. The way is to lie down with the chest on the plank head first, trailing the toes behind, legs extended as rudders to keep the course straight. A push with the feet starts the board, and the pace increasing, you presently travel at a furious velocity. Nothing can be nicer. They worked at it for hours. The old gentleman came out into the garden and watched them, no doubt remembering when he used to do it himself; but as

for the performers, all they thought about him was that they would like to squail a stick at his high and ancient hat aslant on his head.

Presently they rambled into a nut copse over the hill. The nuts were not ripe, and there was nothing much to be done there, but it was a copse, and copses are always pleasant to search about in. Mark returned to the sliding, Bevis sat down on the summit, and at first looked on, but after a while he became lost in his dreamy mood.

Far away the blue-tinted valley went out to the horizon, and the sun was suspended over it like a lamp hung from the ceiling, as it seemed no higher than the hill on which he sat. Underneath was the house, and round the tiled gables the swallows were busy going to and fro their nests. The dovecot and the great barn, the red apples in the orchard, the mill-pool and the grey mill, he could almost put his hand out on them.

Beyond these came the meads, and then the trees closed together like troops at the bugle call, making a limitless forest, and in this was a narrow bright gleam, like a crooked reaping-hook thrown down. It was the New Sea. After which there was no definition, surface only, fainter and fainter to the place where the white clouds went through

the door of distance and disappeared. He did not see these, and only just knew that the wheat at his back rustled as the light wind came over. It was the vast ærial space, and the golden circle of the sun. He did not think, he felt, and listened to it.

Mark shouted presently that Jack was coming home ; so he ran down, and they went to meet him. Jack put up the target after tea. It was a square of rusty sheet-iron, on which he drew a circle with chalk six inches in diameter, and outside that another about two feet. This he placed against the steep hill—the very best of butts—keeping it upright with two stakes, which he drove in the sward. He measured a hundred yards by stepping, and put three flints in a row to mark the spot. The rifle was loaded and the bullet rammed home with the iron ramrod, which had a round smooth handle at the end, so that you might force the lead into the grooves.

Jack fired, and missed ; fired again, and missed ; shot a third time after longer aim, and still there was no ringing sound and no jagged hole in the sheet iron. Bevis tried, and Mark tried, and Jack again, but they could not hit it. More powder was used, and then less powder ; the bullet was jammed home hard by knocking the ramrod with a fragment

of post (the first thing that came handy), and then it was only just pushed down to the powder. All in vain. The noise of the reports had now brought together a number of labourers and cottage boys, who sat on the summit of the hill in a row.

They fired standing up, kneeling down, lying at full length. A chair was fetched, and the barrel was placed on the rung at the back as a rest, but not a single hole was made in the target. Mark wanted to go nearer and try at fifty yards, but Jack would not; the rifle was made to kill deer at a hundred yards, and at a hundred yards he intended to use it. He was getting very angry, for he prided himself on his shooting, and was in fact a good shot with the double-barrel; but this little rifle—a mere toy—defied him; he could not manage it. They fired between thirty and forty shots, till every bullet they had ready cast was gone.

The earth was scored by the target, cut up in front of it, ploughed to the right and left, drilled over it high up, but the broad sheet-iron was untouched.

Jack threatened to pitch the rifle into the mill-pool, and so disgusted was he that very likely he would have done it had not Bevis and Mark begged him earnestly not to do so. He put it up on the

rack, and went off, and they did not see him till supper-time. He was as much out of temper as it was possible for him to be.

When they went to their bedroom that night, Bevis and Mark talked it over, and fully agreed that if they only had the rifle all to themselves they could do it.

“I’m sure we could,” said Bevis.

“Of course we could,” said Mark. “There’s only something you have to find out.”

“As easy as nothing,” said Bevis.

CHAPTER VI.

SAILING.

AT Bevis's home the authorities were still more wroth when they received the scrap of paper sent by Charlie, who scampered off before he could be questioned. There was more wrath about the battle than any of their previous misdeeds, principally because it was something novel. No one was hurt, and no one had even had much of a knock, except the larger boys, who could stand it. There was more rattling of weapons together than wounds. Ted's forehead was bruised, and Bevis's ankle was tender where some one had stepped on it while he was down. This was nothing to the bruises they had often had at football.

The fall over the quarry indeed might have been serious, so too the sinking of the punt; but both those were extrinsic matters, and they might have fought twenty Pharsalias without such incidents.

All of them had had good sense enough to adhere to the agreement they had come to before the fighting. They could not anyhow have hurt themselves more than they commonly did at football, so that the authorities were perhaps a little too bitter about it. If only they had known what was going on, and had had it explained, if it had not been kept secret, so that the anxiety about Bevis being lost might not have been so great, there would not have been much trouble.

But now Bevis and Mark were in deep disgrace. As for their going away they might go and stay away if they wished. For the first day, indeed, it was quite a relief, the house was so quiet and peaceful; it was like a new life altogether. It would be a very good plan to despatch these rebels to a distance, where they would be fully employed, and under supervision. How peaceful it would be! The governor and Bevis's mother thought with such a strain removed they should live fully ten years longer.

But next day somehow it did not seem so pleasant. There was a sense of emptiness about the house. The rooms were vacant, and occasional voices sounded hollow. No one chattered at breakfast. At dinner-time Pan was called in that there might

be some company, and in the stillness they could hear the ring, ring of the blacksmith's hammer on his anvil. When Bevis was at home they could never hear that.

The governor rode off in the afternoon, and Bevis's mother thought now these tormentors were absent it would be a good time to sit down calmly at some needlework.

Every five minutes she got up and looked out of window. Who was that banged the outer gate? Was it Bevis? The familiar patter of steps on the flags, the confused murmur which came before them did not follow. It was only John Young gone out into the road. The clock ticked so loud, and Pan snored in the armchair, and looked at her reproachfully when she woke him. By-and-by she went upstairs into their bedroom. The bed was made, but no one had slept in it.

There was a gimlet on the dressing-table, and Bevis's purse on the floor, and the half-sovereign in it. A great tome, an ancient encyclopædia, which Bevis had dragged upstairs, was lying on a chair, open at "Magic." Mark's pocket-knife was stuck in the bed-post, and in his best hat there were three corn-crake's eggs, blown, of course, and put there for safety, as he never wore it.

She went to the window, and the swallows came to their nests above under the eaves. Bevis's jackets and things were lying everywhere, and as she left the room she saw a curious mark on the threshold, all angles and points. He had been trying to draw the wizard's foot there, inking the five angles, to keep out the evil spirits and witches, according to the proper way, lest they should take the magician by surprise.

Next she went to the bench-room—their armoury—and lifted the latch, but it was locked, the key in Bevis's pocket. The door rattled hollow. She looked through the keyhole, and could see the crossbow and the rigging for the ship. Downstairs again, sitting with her needlework, she heard the carrier's van go by, marking the time to be about four. There was the booing of distant cows, and then a fly buzzed on the pane. She took off her thimble and looked at old Pan in the armchair—old Pan, Bevis's friend.

It was deadly quiet. No shout, and bang, and clatter upstairs. No loud "I must," "I will." No rushing through the room, upsetting chairs, twisting tables askew. No "Ma, where's the hammer?" "Ma, where's my bow?" "Ma, where's my hat?"

She rang the bell, and told Polly to go down and ask Frances to come and take tea with her, as she was quite alone. Frances came, and all the talk was about Bevis, and Mark, and big Jack. So soon as she had heard about the battle Frances immediately took their part, and thought it was very ingenious of Bevis to contrive it, and brave to fight so desperately. Then mamma discovered that it was very good of Mark, and very affectionate, and very brave to row all up the water in the storm to fetch Bevis from the island.

When the governor returned, to his surprise, he found two ladies confronting him with reasons why Bevis and Mark were heroes instead of scamps. He did not agree, but it was of no use ; of course he had to yield, and the result was the dog-cart was sent for them on the following morning. But Bevis was not in the least hurry to return, not a bit. He was disposed, on the contrary, to disobey, and remain where he was. Mark persuaded him not to do this, but still he kept the dog-cart waiting several hours, till long after dinner.

They tried hard to get Jack to let them take the rifle with them, unsuccessfully, for he thought the authorities would not like it. At last Bevis deigned to get up, and they were driven home, for in his

sullen mood Bevis would not even touch the reins, nor let Mark. He was very much offended. The idea of resentment against Ted had never entered his mind. Ted was his equal for one thing, in age.

But he hated to be looked at with a severe countenance as if he had been a rogue and stolen sixpence by the authorities against whom he did not feel that he had done anything. He burned against them as the conspirators abroad burn with rage against the government which rules them. They were not Ted, and equal; they had power and used it over him. Bevis was wrong and very unjust, for they were the tenderest and kindest of home authorities.

At home there was a dessert waiting on the table for them, and some Burgundy. The Burgundy, a wine not much drunk in the country, had been got a long time ago to please Bevis, who had read that Charles the Bold was fond of and took deep draughts of it. Bevis fancied he should like it, and that it would make him bold like Charles. Mamma poured him out a glassful, Mark took his, and said "Thank you."

Bevis drank in silence.

"Aren't you glad to come home?" said mamma.

"No, *that* I'm not," said Bevis, and marched off up into the bench-room. Mamma saw that Mark

wanted to follow, so she kissed him, recollecting that he had ventured through the storm after Bevis, and told him to do as he liked.

"The sails ought to be finished by now," said Bevis, as Mark came up.

"Yes," said Mark, "they're sure to be. But you know I can't go."

"You ought to fetch them," said Bevis, "you're lieutenant; captains don't fetch sails." He was ready for any important exertion, but he had a great idea of getting other people to do these inferior things for him.

"I can't go," said Mark, "Frances hates me."

"O! very well," said Bevis savagely, and ready to quarrel with anybody on the least pretext. The fact was, though resentful, he did not feel quite certain that he approved of his own conduct to his mother. He could have knocked any one down just to recover confidence. He pushed by Mark, slammed the door, and started to get the sails.

Frances laughed when she saw him. "Ah!" she said, "Mark did not care to come, did he?" She brought out the sails nicely hemmed—they had been ready some days—and made them into a parcel for him.

"So you ran away from the battle," she said.

“I didn’t,” said Bevis rudely.

“You sailed away—floated away.”

“Not to run away.”

“Yes, you did. And you were called Cæsar.”

She liked to tease him, being fond of him; she stroked his short golden curls, pinched his arm, kissed him, taunted him, and praised him; walked with him as he went homewards, asked him why he did not offer her his arm, and when he did, said she did not take boys’ arms—*boys* with emphasis—till he grew scarlet with irritation. Then she petted him, asked him about the battle, and said it was wonderful, and he must show her over the battlefield. She made him promise to take her for a sail, and looked so delicious Bevis could not choose but smile.

She had her hat in her hand, such a little hand and so white, like a speck of sunshine among shadows. Her little feet peeped out among the grass and the blue veronica flowers. Her rounded figure, not too tiny at the waist, looked instinct with restless life, buoyant as if she floated. The bright light made her golden brown hair gleam. She lifted her long eyelashes, and looked him through and through with her grey eyes. Delicate arched eyebrows, small regular features, pouting lips, and impudent chin.

"You're very little," said Bevis, able to speak again. "I believe I could lift you over the stile."

She was little—little and delicious, like a wild strawberry, daintily tinted, sweet, piquant, with just enough acid to make you want some more, rare, and seldom found.

"As you are so impertinent," said she, "I shall not come any farther."

Bevis got over the stile first to be safe, then he turned, and said,—

"Jack will have you some day, and he's big, and he'll manage you."

"O!" said Frances, dropping her hat, "O!" Her little foot was put forward, she stood bolt upright with open lips. Scorn, utter, complete, perfect scorn was expressed from head to foot. Jack manage her! The idea! Before she could recover her breath, Bevis, who had immediately started running, was half across the next field.

Next morning they set to work to fix up the blue boat for sailing, and first stepped the mast and wedged it tight with a chip. A cord came down each side aslant to the gunwale, and was fastened there—these were the backstays to strengthen the mast when the wind blew rough. The bowsprit was

lashed firmly at the bow, and the sheets or cords to work the foresail put through the staples, after which the tiller was fixed on instead of the lines. They had two sails—mainsail (without a boom) and foresail. Bevis once thought of having a topsail, but found it very awkward to contrive it without the ropes (they always called their cords ropes) becoming entangled.

The rigging and sails were now up, and Mark wanted to unfurl them and see how they answered, but Bevis, who was in a sullen mood, would not let him, till everything was completed. They had to put in the ballast, first bricks placed close together on the bottom, then two small bags of sand, and a large flat stone, which they thought would be enough. All this occupied a great deal of time, what with having to go backwards and forwards to the house for things and tools that had been forgotten, and the many little difficulties that always arise when anything new is being done.

Nothing fits the first time, and it all has to be done twice. So that when the last thing of all, the oyster-barrel with the tin canister inside, was put on board, it was about four in the afternoon. When they began to push the boat off the ground and get her afloat, they found that the wind had sunk. In

the morning it had blown steadily from the westward, and busy at their work they had not noticed that after noon it gently declined. They pushed off, and rowed a hundred yards, so as to be out of the shelter of the trees on the shore, but there was no more breeze there than in the corner which they called the harbour.

The surface was smooth, and all the trees were reflected in it. Bevis had been sullen and cross all day, and this did not improve his temper. It was very rare for him to continue angry like this, and Mark resented it, so that they did not talk much. Bevis unfurled the sails and hoisted them up. The foresail worked perfectly, but the mainsail would not go up nor come down quickly. It was fastened to the mast by ten or twelve brass rings for travellers, and these would not slip, though they looked plenty large enough. They stuck, and had to be pushed by hand before the sail could be hoisted.

This was not at all proper, sails ought to go up and down easily and without a moment's delay, which might indeed be dangerous in a squall. Bevis pulled out his knife, and cut a number of them off, leaving only three or four, and the sail then worked much better. Next they tried reefing, they had put in two rows, but when the second was taken in the

sail looked rather shapeless, and Bevis angrily cut off the second row. He told Mark to row back while he furled, and Mark did so. After they had fastened the boat by the painter to the willow root, and picked up their tools, they went homewards, leaving the rigging standing ready for use on the morrow.

"There's two things now," said Mark, "that ought to be done."

"What's that?" crossly.

"There ought to be an iron ring and staple to tie the ship to—a ship ought not to be tied to a root."

"Get a ring, then."

"And another thing—two more things."

"That there are not."

"That there are. You want a bowl to bale the water out, the waves are sure to splash over."

"That's nothing."

"Well, then," said Mark savagely, "you've forgotten the anchor."

Bevis looked at him as if he could have smashed him, and then went up into the bench-room without a word.

"You're a bear," shouted Mark from the bottom of the staircase. "I shan't come;" and he went to the parlour and found a book. For the remainder of the day, whenever they met, in a minute they were

off at a tangent, and bounded apart. Bevis was as cross as a bear, and Mark would not conciliate him, not seeing that he had given him the least reason. At night they quarrelled in their bedroom, Bevis grumbling at Mark for throwing his jacket on the chair he generally used, and Mark pitching Bevis's waistcoat into a corner.

About ten minutes after the candle was out, Bevis got up, slipped on his trousers and jacket, and went downstairs barefoot in the dark.

"Glad you're gone," said Mark.

Bevis opened the door of the sitting-room where his mother was reading, walked up to her, kissed her, and whispered, "I'm sorry ; tell the governor," and was off before she could answer. Next morning he was as bright as a lark, and every thing went smoothly again. The governor smiled once more, and asked where they intended to sail to first.

"Serendib," said Mark.

"A long voyage," said the governor.

"Thousands of miles," said Bevis. "Come on, Mark ; what a lot you do eat."

Mark came, but as they went up the meadow he said that there ought to be an anchor.

"So there ought," said Bevis. "We'll make one

like that in the picture—you know, with a wooden shaft, and a stone let through it.”

“Like they used to have when they first had ships,” said Mark.

“And went cruising along the shore—”

“We’ve forgotten the compass.”

“Of course, that’s right; they had no compass when we lived.”

“No; they steered by the sun. Look, there’s a jolly wind.”

The water was rippling under a light but steady and pleasant summer breeze from the north-west. They pushed out, and while the boat slowly drifted, set the sails. Directly the foresail was up she turned and moved bow first, like a horse led by the bridle. When the mainsail was hoisted she began to turn again towards the wind, so that Bevis, who steered, had to pull the tiller towards him, or in another minute they would have run into the weeds. He kept her straight before the wind till they had got out of the bay where the boats were kept, and into the open water where the wind came stronger. Then he steered up the New Sea, so that the wind blew right across the boat, coming from the right-hand side.

It was a beautiful breeze, just the one they

wanted, not too strong, and from the best direction, so that they could sail all the way there and back without trouble, a soldier's wind, out and home again.

Mark sat by the mast, both of them on the windward side, so as to trim the boat by their weight and make her stiffer. He was to work the foresail if they had to tack, or let down the main-sail if a white squall or a tornado struck the ship. The ripples kissed the bow with a merry smack, smack, smack; sometimes there was a rush of bubbles, and they could feel the boat heel a little as the wind for a moment blew harder.

"How fast we're going!" said Mark. "Hurrah!"

"Listen to the bubbles? Don't the sails look jolly?" said Bevis. The sunshine shone on the white canvas hollowed out by the wind; as the pilot looked up he could see the slender top of the mast tracing a line under the azure sky. Is there anything so delicious as the first sail in your own boat that you have rigged yourself?

Away she slipped, and Mark began to hum, knocking the seat with his knuckles to keep time. Then Bevis sang, making a tune of his own, leaning back and watching the sails with the sheet handy to let go if a puff came, for were they not voyaging

on unknown seas? Bevis sang the same two verses over and over :—

“Telling how the Count Arnaldos,
With his hawk upon his hand,
Saw a fair and stately galley,
Steering onward to the land.

* * * * *

“ ‘ Wouldst thou,’ so the helmsman answer’d,
‘ Learn the secret of the sea ?
Only those who brave its dangers,
Comprehend its mystery ! ’ ”

Mark sang with him, till by-and-by he said,
“ There’s the battlefield ; what country’s that ? ”

“ Thessaly,” said Bevis. “ It’s the last land we know ; now it’s all new, and nobody knows anything.”

“ Except us.”

“ Of course.”

“ Are you going all round or straight up ? ”
said Mark presently, as they came near Fir-Tree Gulf.

“ We ought to coast,” said Bevis. “ They used to ; we mustn’t go out of sight of land.”

“ Steer into the gulf then ; mind the stony point ; what’s that, what’s the name ? ”

“ I don’t know,” said Bevis. “ It’s a dreadful

place ; awful rocks—smash, crash, ship's side stove in—no chance for any body to escape there."

"A raft would be smashed."

"Lifeboats swamped."

"People jammed on the rocks."

"Pounded into jelly-fish."

"But it ought to have a name? Is it Cape Horn?"

"I don't think so, that's the other way round the world ; we're more the India way, I think."

"Perhaps it's Gibraltar."

"As if we shouldn't know Gibraltar!"

"Of course we should, I forgot. Look ! There's a little island and a passage—a channel. Mind how you steer—"

"It's Scylla and Charybdis," said Bevis. "I can see quite plain."

"Steer straight," said Mark. "There's not much room, rocks one side, shoal the other ; it's not a pistol-shot wide—"

"Not half a pistol-shot."

"We're going. Hark ! bubbles !"

CHAPTER VII.

SAILING CONTINUED—"THERE SHE LAY, ALL THE
DAY!"

BEVIS had eased off, and the boat was sailing right before the wind, which blew direct into the gulf. Mark crawled up more into the bow to see better and shout directions to the pilot.

"Left—left."

"Port."

"Well, port."

"Starboard, now—that side. There, we scraped some weeds." The weeds made a rustling sound as the boat passed over them.

"Right—right—starboard, that side," holding out his hand, "you'll hit the rocks; you're too close."

"Pooh!" said Bevis. "It's deeper under the rocks, don't you remember." He prided himself on steering within an inch; the boat glided between the

sandy island and the rocky wall, so close to the wall that the sail leaning over the side nearly swept it. Then he steered so as to pass along about three yards from the shore. The quarry opened out, and they went by it on towards the place where they bathed.

“Rails,” said Mark, “mind the rails.” By the bathing-place the posts and rails which were continued into the water were partly under the surface, so that a boat might get fixed on the top. Bevis pushed the tiller over, and the boat came round broadside to the wind, and began to cross the head of Fir-Tree Gulf.

The ripples here increased in size, and became wavelets as the breeze, crossing a wider surface of water, blew straight on shore, and seemed to rush in a stronger draught through the trees. These wavelets were not large enough to make the boat dance, but they caused more splashing at the bow, and she heeled a little to the wind. They slipped across the head of the gulf, some two hundred yards, at a good pace, steering for the mouth of the Nile.

“Tack,” said Bevis, as they came near. “It’s almost time. Get ready.”

Mark unfastened the cord or sheet on the left side,

against which the foresail was pulling, and held it in his hand. "I'm ready," he said, and in a minute,—“Quick, we shall be on shore.”

Bevis pushed the tiller down hard to the left, at the same time telling Mark to let go. Mark loosened the foresheet, and the boat turning to the right was carried by her own impetus and the pressure of the mainsail up towards the wind. Bevis expected her to do as he had seen the yachts and ships at the seaside, and as he had read was the proper way, to come round slowly facing the wind, till just as she passed the straight line as it were of the breeze, Mark would have to tighten the foresheet, and the wind would press on the foresail like a lever and complete the turn.

He watched the foresail eagerly, for the moment to shout to Mark; the boat moved up towards the wind, then paused, hung, and began to fall back again. The wind blew her back. Bevis jammed the tiller down still harder, rose from his seat, bawled, “Mark! Mark!” but he was jerked back in a moment as she took the ground.

Mark seized a scull to push her off, when letting go the sheet the foresail flapped furiously, drawing the cord or rope through the staple as if it would snap it. Bevis, fearing the boat would turn over, let go the

mainsheet, and then the mainsail flew over the left side, flapping and shaking the mast, while the sheet or rope struck the water and splashed it as if it were hit with a whip.

"Pull down the mainsail," shouted Bevis, stumbling forward.

"Hold tight," shouted Mark, giving a great shove with the scull. The boat came off, and Bevis was thrown down on the ballast. The wind took her before they could scramble into their places, and she drifted across the mouth of the Nile and grounded again.

"Down with the sail, I tell you," shouted Bevis in a rage. "Not that one—the big one."

Mark undid the cord or halyard, and down fell the mainsail into the boat, covering Bevis, who had to get out from under it before he could do anything.

"Did you ever see such a bother?" said Mark.

"Is anything broken?" said Bevis.

"No. You ought to have tacked sooner.

"How could I tell? She wouldn't come round."

"You ought to have had room to try twice."

"So we will next time."

"Let's go up the Nile and turn round, and get the sails up there," said Mark. "It will be such a flapping here."

Bevis agreed, and they pushed the boat along with the sculls a few yards up the Nile which was quite smooth there, while at the mouth the quick wavelets dashed against the shore. The bank of the river and the trees on it sheltered them while they turned the boat's head round, and carefully set the sails for another trial.

“ We'll have two tries this time,” said Bevis, “ and we're sure to do it. If we can't tack, it's no use sailing.”

When everything was ready, Mark rowed a few strokes with one oar till the wind began to fill the sails; then he shipped it, and sat down on the ballast on the windward side. The moment she was outside the Nile the splashing began, and Mark, to his great delight, felt a little spray in his face. “ This is real sailing,” he said.

“ Now we're going,” said Bevis, as the boat increased her speed. “ Let's see how much we can gain on this tack.” He kept her as close to the wind as he could, but so as still to have the sails well filled and drawing. He let the mainsail hollow out somewhat, thinking that it would hold the wind more and draw them faster.

“ Hurrah ! ” said Mark ; “ we're getting a good

way up; there's the big sarsen—we shall get up to it."

There was a large sarsen or boulder, a great brown stone, lying on the shore on the quarry side of the gulf, about thirty yards above the bathing-place. If they could get as high up as the boulder, that would mean that in crossing the gulf on that tack they had gained thirty yards in direct course, thirty yards against the wind. To Mark it looked as if they were sailing straight for the boulder, but the boat was not really going in the exact direction her bow pointed.

She inclined to the right, and to have found her actual course he ought to have looked not over the stem but over the lee bow. The lee is the side away from the wind. That is to say, she drifted or made leeway, so that when they got closer they were surprised to see she was not so high up as the boulder by ten yards. She was off a bunch of rushes when Bevis told Mark to be ready. He had allowed space enough this time for two trials.

"Now," said Bevis, pushing the tiller over to the right; "let go."

Mark loosened the foresail, that it might not offer any resistance to the wind, and so check the boat from turning.

Bevis pushed the tiller over still harder, and as she had been going at a good pace the impetus made her answer the rudder better.

"She's coming," shouted Mark. "Jam the rudder."

The rudder was jammed, but when the bow seemed just about to face the wind, and another foot would have enabled Mark to tighten the foresail, and let it draw her quite round like a lever, she lost all forward motion.

"O ! dear !" said Bevis, stamping with vexation. The boat stopped a moment, and then slowly fell back. "Pull tight," said Bevis, meaning refasten the foresheet. Mark did so, and the boat began to move ahead again.

"We're very close," said Mark almost directly.

"Tack," said Bevis. "Let go."

He tried to run her up into the wind again, but this time, having less weigh or impetus, she did not come nearly so far round, but began to pay off, or fall back directly, and, before Mark could get a scull out, bumped heavily against the shore, which was stony there.

"Let's row her head round," said Mark.

"Sculls ought not to be used," said Bevis. "It's lubberly."

“Awful lubberly,” said Mark. “But what are we to do?”

“Pull away, anyhow,” said Bevis.

Mark put out the scull, pushed her off, and after some trouble pulled till her head came round. Then he shipped the scull, and they began to sail again.

“We haven’t got an inch,” said Bevis. “Just look; there are the rails.”

They had made about twenty yards, but in missing stays twice, drifting, and rowing round, had lost it all before the boat could get right again, before the sails began to draw well.

“What ever is it?” said Mark. “What is it we don’t do?”

“I can’t think,” said Bevis. “It’s very stupid. That’s better.”

There was a hissing and bubbling, and the boat, impelled by a stronger puff, rushed along, and seemed to edge a way up into the wind.

“Splendid,” said Mark. “We shall get above the Nile this time, we shall get to the willow.”

A willow-tree stood on the shore that side some way up. The boat appeared to move direct for it.

“I shall tack soon,” said Bevis, “while we’ve got a good wind.”

"Tack now," said Mark. "It doesn't matter about going right across."

"All right—now; let go."

They tried again, just the same; the boat paused and came back: then again, and still it was of no use.

"Row," said Bevis. "Bother!"

Mark rowed with a scull out on the lee side, and got her round.

"Now, just look," said Bevis. "Just look!"

He pointed at the Nile. They had drifted so that when they at last turned they were nearly level with the mouth of the river from which they had started.

"Let me row quicker next time," said Mark. "Let me row directly. It's hateful, though."

"It's hateful," said Bevis. "Sailing without tacking is stupid. Nobody would ever think we were sailors to see us rowing round."

"What's to be done?" said Mark. "Now try."

Bevis put the tiller down, and Mark pulled her head round as quick as he could. By the time the sails had begun to draw they had lost more than half they had gained, and in crossing as the breeze slackened a little lost the rest, and found themselves as before, just off the mouth of the Nile.

"I don't think you keep her up tight enough,"

said Mark, as they began to cross again. "Try her closer. Close-hauled, you know."

"So I will," said Bevis; and the breeze rising again he pulled the mainsheet tighter (while Mark tightened the foresheet), and pushed the tiller over somewhat.

The boat came closer to the wind, and seemed now to be sailing straight for the quarry.

"There," said Mark, "we shall get out of the gulf in two tacks."

"But we're going very slow," said Bevis.

"It doesn't matter if we get to the quarry."

The boat continued to point at the quarry, and Bevis watched the mainsail intently, with his hand on the tiller, keeping her so that the sail should not shiver, and yet should be as near to it as possible.

"Splendid," said Mark, on his knees on the ballast, looking over the stem. "Splendid. It's almost time to tack."

He lifted the foresail, and peered under it at the shore.

"I say—well, Bevis!"

"What is it?" asked Bevis. "I'm watching the mainsail; is it time?"

"We haven't got an inch—we're going—let's see—not so far up as the rushes."

All the while the boat's head pointed at the quarry she had been making great lee-way, drifting with the wind and waves. The sails scarcely drew, and she had no motion to cut her way into the wind. Instead of edging up into it, she really crossed the gulf in nearly a straight line, almost level with the spot whence she started. When Bevis tried to get her round, she would not come at all. She was moving so slowly she had no impetus, and the wind blew her back. Mark had to row round again.

"That's no use," he said. "But it looked as if it was."

"She won't sail very near the wind," said Bevis, as they crossed again towards the Nile. "We must let her run free, and keep the sails hollow."

They crossed and crossed five times more, and still came only just above the mouth of the Nile, and back to the bunch of rushes.

"I believe it's the jib," said Bevis, as they sailed for the quarry side once more. "Let's try without the jib. Perhaps it's the jib won't let her come round. Take it down."

Mark took the foresail down, and the boat did show some disposition to run up into the wind; but

when Bevis tried to tack she went half way, and then payed off and came back, and they nearly ran on the railings, so much did they drift. Still they tried without the foresail again; the boat they found did not sail so fast, and it was not the least use, she would not come round. So they re-set the foresail. Again and again they sailed to and fro, from the shore just above the Nile to the bunch of rushes, and never gained a foot, or if they did one way they lost it the other. They were silent for some time.

“It’s like the Bay of Biscay,” said Mark.

“ ‘ There she lay, all the day,
In the Bay of Biscay, O ! ’

“ And the sails look so jolly too.”

“ I can’t make it out,” said Bevis. “ The sails are all proper, I’m sure they are. What can it be ? We shall never get out of the gulf.”

“ And after all the rowing round too,” said Mark. “ Lubberly.”

“ Horrid,” said Bevis. “ I hope there’s no other ship about looking at us. The sailors would laugh so. I know—Mark ! ”

“ Yes.”

“ Don’t row next time ; we’ll wear ship.”

"What's that?"

"Turn the other way—with the wind. Very often the boom knocks you over or tears the mast out."

"Capital, only we've no boom. What must I do?"

"Nothing; you'll see. Sit still—in the middle. Now."

Bevis put the tiller over to windward. The boat paid off rapidly to leeward, and described a circle, the mainsail passing over to the opposite side, and as it took the wind giving a jerk to the mast.

Mark tightened the other foresheet, and they began to sail back again.

"But just look!" said he.

"Horrid," said Bevis.

In describing the circle they had lost not only what they had gained, but were level with the mouth of the Nile, and not five yards from the shore at the head of the gulf. It was as much this tack as they could do to get above the railings; they were fifteen yards at least below the rushes, when Bevis put the tiller up to windward, and tried the same thing again. The boat turned a circle to leeward, and before she could get right round and

begin to sail again, they had gone so near the shore, drifting, that Mark had to put out the scull in case they should bump. In crossing this time the wind blew so light that they could not get above the mouth of the Nile.

"It's no use wearing ship," said Mark.

"Not a bit; we lose more than ever. You'd better row again," said Bevis reluctantly.

Mark pulled her round again, and they sailed to and fro three times more, but did but keep their position, for the wind was perceptibly less as the day went on, and it became near noon.

"I hate those rushes," said Mark, as he pulled her head round once more.

Bevis did not reply, but this time he steered straight across to the Nile and up it till the bank sheltered them from the wind. There they took down the sails, quite beaten, for that day at least, and rowed back to harbour.

Next morning when they arrived at the New Sea they found that the wind came more down the water, having turned a little to the south, but it was the same in force. They started again, and sailed very well till they were opposite the hollow oak in which on the day of battle it was supposed Bevis had hidden. Here the wind was a head-wind,

against which they could only work by tacking, and when they came to tack they found just the same difficulty as yesterday.

All the space they gained during the tack was lost in coming round before the boat could get weigh on her. They sailed to and fro from the hollow oak to some willow bushes on the other side, and could not advance farther. Sometimes they got above the oak, but then they fell back behind the willow bushes; sometimes they worked up twenty yards higher than the willow bushes, but dropped below the oak.

Bevis soon discovered why they made better tacks now and then; it was because the wind shifted a little, and did not so directly oppose them. The instant it returned to its usual course they could not progress up the sea. By the willow bushes they could partly see into Fir-Tree Gulf; yesterday they could not sail out of the gulf, and to-day, with all their efforts, they could not sail into it.

After about twenty trials they were compelled to own that they were beaten, and returned to harbour. Bevis was very much troubled with this failure, and as soon as they had got home he asked Mark to go up in the bench-room, or do anything he

liked, and leave him by himself while he looked at the old encyclopædia.

Mark did as he was asked, knowing that Bevis always learnt anything best by himself. Bevis went up into the bedroom, where the great book remained open on the chair, knelt down, and set to work to read everything there was in it on ships and navigation. There was the whole history of boats and ships, from the papyrus canoes of the Nile, made by plaiting the stalks, the earthenware boats, hide boats, rafts or skins, hollowed trees, bark canoes, catamarans, and proas. There was an account of the triremes of Rome, and on down to the caravels, bilanders, galliots, zebecs, and great three-deckers. The book did not quite reach to the days of glorious Nelson.

It laid down the course supposed to have been followed by Ulysses, and described the voyages of the Phœnicians to Britain. The parts of a three-decker were pictured, and the instruments of navigation were explained with illustrations. Everything was there except what Bevis wanted, for in all this exhaustive and really interesting treatise, there were no plain directions how to tack.

There were the terms and the very orders in

nautical language, but no explanation as to how it was done. Bevis shut the book up, and rose with a sigh, for he had become so occupied with his search that he had unconsciously checked his breathing. He went down to the bookcase and stood before it thoughtfully. Presently he recollected that there was something about yachting in a modern book of sports. He found it and read it carefully, but though it began about Dædalus, and finished with the exact measurement of a successful prize-winning yacht, he could not make out what he wanted.

The account was complete even to the wages of the seamen and the method of signalling with flags. There was a glossary of terms, but nothing to tell him how to tack, that is, nothing that he could understand. He put the book away, and went out into the blue-painted summer-house to think it over again.

What you really want to know is never in a book, and no one can tell you. By-and-by, if you keep it steadily in memory and ever have your eyes open, you hit on it by accident. Some mere casual incident throws the solution right into your hands at an unexpected moment.

Bevis had fitted up his boat according to his

recollections of those he had seen in the pictures.

There was no sailing-boat that he could go and see nearer than forty miles. As he sat thinking it over Mark rushed up. He, too, had been thinking, and he had found something.

"I know," he said.

"What?"

"We have not got enough ballast," said Mark. "That's it—I'm sure that's it. Don't you remember how the boat kept drifting?"

"Very likely," said Bevis. "Yes, that's it; how stupid we were. Let's get some more directly. I know; I'll ask the governor for a bag of shot."

The governor allowed them to take the bag, which weighed twenty-eight pounds, on condition that they put it inside a small sack, so as to look like sand, else some one might steal it. They also found two pieces of iron, scraps, which made up the fresh ballast to about forty pounds. The wind had now gone down as it did soon after midday, and they could do nothing.

But next morning it blew again from the south, and they were afloat directly after breakfast. The effect of the ballast was as Mark had anticipated; the boat did not drift so much, she made

less lee-way, and she was stiffer, that is, she stood up to the wind better. They did not lose so much quite, but still they did not gain, nor would she come round without using a scull ; indeed, she was even worse in this respect, and more obstinate, she would not come up into the wind, the weight seemed to hold her back.

After two hours they were obliged to give it up for the third time. The following day there was no wind. “ Let’s make the anchor,” said Mark, “ and while we’re making the anchor perhaps we shall think of something about tacking.”

So they began to make the anchor, after the picture of one in the old folio. They found a square piece of deal, it was six inches by four, and sawed off about two feet. In the middle they cut a long hole right through, and after much trouble found a flat stone to fit it. This was wedged in tight, and further fastened with tar cord. Near one end a small square hole was cut, and through this they put a square rod of iron, which the blacksmith sold them for a shilling—about three times its value.

The rod was eighteen inches long, and when it was through it was bent up, or curved, and the ends filed to a blunt point. It fitted tight, but they wedged it still firmer with nails, and it was

put the opposite way to the stone, so that when the stone tried to sink flat on the bottom, one or other of the points of the bar would stick in the ground. Mark thought there ought to be a cross-piece of wood or iron as there is in proper anchors, but so far as they could make out, this was not attached to the ancient stone-weighted ones, and so they did not put it.

Lastly, a hole was bored at the other end of the shaft, and the rope or cable (a stout cord) inserted and fastened. Looking eagerly out of window in the morning to see if there was a wind they were delighted to see the clouds drifting from the north-north-west. This was a capital wind for them as they could not tack. It was about the same that had been blowing the first day when they sailed into Fir-Tree Gulf and could not get out, but it would have taken them to the very end of the New Sea had they not considered it proper to coast round. This time they meant to sail straight up the centre and straight back.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAILING CONTINUED—VOYAGE TO THE UNKNOWN ISLAND.

AFTER breakfast they got afloat, and when away from the trees the boat began to sail fast, and every now and then the bubbles rushed from under the bow. Mark sat on the ballast, or rather reclined, and Bevis steered. The anchor was upon the fore-castle, as they called it, with twenty-five feet of cable. Sailing by the bluff covered with furze, by the oak where the council was held, past the muddy shore lined with weeds where the cattle came down to drink, past the hollow oak and the battle field, they saw the quarry and Fir-Tree Gulf, but did not enter it. As they reached the broader water the wind came fresher over the wide surface, and the boat careening a little hastened on. They were now a long way from either shore in the centre of the widest part.

"This is the best sail we've had," said Mark, putting his legs out as far as he could, leaning his back against the seat and his head against the mast. "It's jolly."

Bevis got off the stern-sheets and sat down on the bottom so that he too could recline, he had nothing to do but just keep the tiller steady and watch the mainsail, the wind set the course for them. They could feel the breeze pulling at the sails, and the boat drawn along.

"Is it rough?" said Mark.

"Shall we take in a reef?" said Bevis.

"No," said Mark. "Let's capsize."

"Right," said Bevis. "It doesn't matter."

"Not a bit. Isn't she slipping along?"

"Gurgling and guggling."

"Bubbling and smacking. That was spray."

"There's a puff. How many knots are we going?"

"Ten."

"Pooh! twenty. No chance of a pirate catching us."

"In these unknown seas," said Mark, "you can't tell what proas are waiting behind the islands, nor how many Malays with creeses."

"They're crooked the wrong way," said Bevis. "The most curious knives I ever saw."

“Or junks,” went on Mark. “Are these the Chinese Seas?”

“Jingalls,” said Bevis, “they shoot big bullets, almost cannon-balls, as big as walnuts. I wish we had one in the forecastle.”

“We ought to have a cannon.”

“Of course we did.”

“As if we couldn’t manage a cannon!”

“As if!”

“Or a double-barrel gun.”

“Or anything.”

“Anything.”

“People *are* stupid.”

“Idiotic.”

“We must have a gun.”

“We must.”

They listened again to the gurgling and “gug-gling,” the bubbles, and kiss, kiss of the wavelets.

“We’re a long way now,” said Mark presently. “Can we see land?”

“See land! We lost sight of land months ago. I should think not. Look up there.”

Bevis was watching the top of the mast, tracing its line along the sky, where white filmy clouds were floating slowly. Mark opened his drowsy eyes and looked up too.

“No land in sight,” said he.

“Nothing but sky and clouds,” said Bevis.

“How far are we from shore?”

“Six thousand miles.”

“It’s the first time anybody has ever sailed out of sight of land in our time,” said Mark. “It’s very wonderful, and we shall be made a great deal of when we get home.”

“Yes, and put in prison afterwards. That’s the proper way.”

“We shall bring home sandal-wood, and diamonds as big as—as apples—”

“And see unknown creatures in the sea, and butterflies as huge as umbrellas—”

“Catch fevers and get well again—”

“We must make notes of the language, and coax the people to give us some of their ancient books.”

“O! I say,” said Mark, “when you were on the Unknown Island did you see the magician with long white robes, and the serpent a hundred feet long he keeps in a cave under the bushes?”

“No,” said Bevis, “I forgot him.” So he had. His imagination ran so rapidly, one thing took the place of the other as the particles of water take each other’s place in a running brook. “We shall find him, I dare say.”

“Let’s land and see.”

“So we will.”

“Are you sure you’re steering right?”

“O! yes; it’s nothing to do, you only have to keep the wind in the sails.”

“I wonder what bird that is?” said Mark, as a dove flew over. He knew a dove well enough on land.

“It’s a sort of parrot, no doubt.”

“I wonder how deep it is here.”

“About a million fathoms.”

“No use trying to anchor.”

“Not the least.”

“It’s very warm.”

“In these places ships get burnt by the sun sometimes.”

Another short silence.

“Is it time to take a look-out, captain?”

“Yes, I think so,” said the captain.

Mark crept up in the bow.

“You’re steering too much to the right—that way,” he cried, holding out his right arm.

“Is that better?”

“More over.”

“There.”

“Right.”

As the boat fell off a little from the wind obeying the tiller, Bevis, now the foresail was out of his line of sight could see the Unknown Island. They were closer than they had thought.

“Shall we land on Serendib?”

“O! no—on your island,” said Mark. “Steer as close to the cliff as you can.”

Bevis did so, and the boat approached the low sandy cliff against which the waves had once beat with such fury. The wavelets now washed sideways past it with a gentle splashing, they were not large enough to make the boat dance, and if they had liked they could have gone up and touched it.

“It looks very deep under it,” said Mark, as Bevis steered into the channel, keeping two or three yards from shore.

“Ready,” he said; “get ready to furl the mainsail.”

Mark partly unfastened the halyard, and held it in his hand. Almost directly they had passed the cliff they were in the lee of the island which kept off the wind. The boat moved, carried on by its impetus through the still water, but the sails did not draw. In a minute Bevis told Mark to let the mainsail down, and as it dropped Mark hauled the sail in or the folds would have fallen in the water.

At the same moment Bevis altered the course, and ran her ashore some way below where he had leaped off the punt, and where it was low and shelving. Mark was out the instant she touched with the painter, and tugged her up on the strand. Bevis came forward and let down the foresail, then he got out.

“Captain,” said Mark, “may I go round the island?”

“Yes,” said the captain, and Mark stepped in among the bushes to explore. Bevis went a little way and sat down under a beech. The hull of the boat was hidden by the undergrowth, but he could see the slender mast and some of the rigging over the boughs. The sunshine touched the top of the smooth mast, which seemed to shine above the green leaves. There was the vessel; his comrade was exploring the unknown depths of the wood; they were far from the old world and the known countries. He sat and gloated over the voyage, till by-and-by he remembered the tacking.

They could not do it, even yet they were only half mariners, and were obliged to wait for a fair wind. If it changed while they were on the island they would have to row back. He was no longer satisfied; he went down to the boat, stepped on board,

and hoisted the sails. The trees and the island itself so kept off the wind that it was perfectly calm, and the sails did not even flutter. He stepped on shore, and went a few yards where he could look back and get a good view of the vessel, trying to think what it could be they did not do, or what it could be that was wrong.

He looked at her all over, from the top of the mast to the tiller, and he could not discover anything. Bevis walked up and down, he worked himself quite into a fidget. He went into the wood a little way, half inclined to go after Mark as he felt so restless. All at once he took out his pocket-book and pencil and sat down on the ground just where he was, and drew a sailing-boat such as he had seen. Then he went back to the shore, and sketched their boat on the other leaf. His idea was to compare the sailing-boats he had seen with theirs.

When he had finished his outline drawing he saw directly that there were several differences. The mast in the boat sketched from memory was much higher than the mast in the other. Both sails, too, were larger than those he had had made. The bowsprit projected farther, but the foresail was not so much less in proportion as the mainsail. The foresail looked almost large enough, but the mainsail in

the boat was not only smaller, it was not of the same shape.

In his sketch from memory the gaff or rod at the top of the sail rose up at a sharper angle, and the sail came right back to the tiller. In the actual boat before him the gaff was but little more than horizontal to the mast, and the sail only came back three-fourths of the distance it ought to have done.

"It must be made bigger," Bevis thought. "The mainsail must be made ever so much larger, and it must reach to where I sit. That's the mistake—you can see it in a minute. Mark! Mark!" He shouted and whistled.

Mark came presently running. "I've been all round," he said panting, "and I've—"

"This is it," said Bevis, holding up his pocket-book.

"I've seen a huge jack—a regular shark. I believe it was a shark—and three young wild ducks, and some more of those parrots up in the trees."

"The mainsail—"

"And something under the water that made a wave, and went along—"

"Look, you see it ought to come—"

"What could it have been that made the wave and went along?"

“O! nothing—only a porpoise, or a seal, or a walrus—nothing! Look here—”

“But,” said Mark, “the wave moved along, and I could not tell what made it.”

“Magic,” said Bevis. “Very likely the magician. Did you see him?”

“No; but I believe there’s something very curious about this island—”

“It’s enchanted, of course,” said Bevis.

“There’s lots of things you know are there, and you can’t find,” said Mark; “there’s a tiger, I believe, in the bushes and reeds at the other end. If I had had my spear I should have gone and looked, and there’s boa-constrictors and a hippopotamus was here last night, and heaps of jolly things, and I’ve found a place to make a cave. Come and see” (pulling Bevis).

“I’ll come,” said Bevis, “in a minute. But just look, I’ve found out what was wrong—”

“And how to tack?”

“Yes.”

“Then let’s do it, and tack and get shipwrecked, and live here. If we only had Jack’s rifle.”

“But we must sail properly first,” said Bevis. “I shan’t do anything till we can sail properly: now this is it. Look.”

He showed Mark the two sketches, and how their

mainsail did not reach back far enough towards the stern.

“Frances must make it larger,” said Mark. “Of course that’s it—it’s as different as possible. And the mast ought to be higher—it would crack better, and go overboard—whop!”

“I don’t know,” said Bevis “about the mast; yes, I think I will. We will make one a foot or eighteen inches higher—”

“Bigger sails will go faster, and smash the ship splendidly against the rocks,” said Mark. “There’ll be a crash and a grinding, and the decks will blow up, and there’ll be an awful yell as everybody is gulped up but you and me.”

“While we’re doing it, we’ll make another bowsprit, too—longer,” said Bevis.

“Why didn’t we think of it before,” said Mark. “How stupid! Now you look at it, you can see it in a minute. And we had to sail half round the world to find it.”

“That’s just it,” said Bevis. “You sail forty thousand miles to find a thing, and when you get there you can see you left it at home.”

“We have been stupes,” said Mark. “Let’s do it directly. I’ll shave the new mast, and you take the sails to Frances. And now come and see the place for the cave.”

Bevis went with him, and Mark took him to the bank or bluff inside the island which Bevis had passed when he explored it the evening of the battle. The sandy bank rose steeply for some ten or fifteen feet, and then it was covered with brambles and fern. There was a space at the foot clear of bushes and trees, and only overgrown with rough grasses. Beyond this there were great bramble thickets, and the trees began again about fifty yards away, encircling the open space. The spot was almost in the centre of the island, but rather nearer the side where there was a channel through the weeds than the other.

“The sand’s soft and hard,” said Mark. “I tried it with my knife; you can cut it, but it won’t crumble.”

“We should not have to prop the roof,” said Bevis.

“No, and it’s as dry as chips; it’s the most splendid place for a cave that ever was.”

“So it is,” said Bevis. “Nobody could see us.”

He looked round. The high bank shut them in behind, the trees in front and each side. “Besides, there’s nobody to look. It’s capital.”

“Will you do it,” said Mark.

“Of course I will—directly we can sail properly.”

“Hurrah!” shouted Mark, hitting up his heels, having caught that trick from Bevis. “Let’s go home and begin the sails. Come on.”

“But I know one thing,” said Bevis, as they returned to the boat; “if we’re going to have a cave, we must have a gun.”

“That’s just what I say. Can’t we borrow one? I know, you put up Frances to make Jack lend us his rifle. She’s fond of you—she hates me.”

“I’ll try,” said Bevis. “How ought you to get a girl to do anything?”

“Stare at her,” said Mark. “That’s what Jack does, like a donk at a thistle when he can’t eat any more.”

“Does Frances like the staring?”

“She pretends she doesn’t, but she does. You stare at her, and act stupid.”

“Is Jack stupid?”

“When he’s at our house,” said Mark. “He’s as stupid as an owl. Now she kisses you, and you just whisper and squeeze her hand, and say it’s very tiny. You don’t know how conceited she is about her hand—can’t you see—she’s always got it somewhere where you can see it; and she sticks her foot out so” (Mark put one foot out); “and don’t you move an inch, but stick close to her, and get her into a corner or in the harbour. Mind, though, if you don’t keep on telling her how pretty she is, she’ll box your ears. That’s why she hates me—”

“Because you don’t tell her she’s pretty. But she is pretty.”

“But I’m not going to be always telling her so—I don’t see that she’s anything very beautiful either—you and I should look nice if we were all the afternoon doing our hair, and if we walked like that and stuck our noses up in the air; and kept grinning, and smacked ourselves with powder, and scent, and all such beastly stuff. Now Jack’s rifle—”

“We could make it shoot,” said Bevis, “if we had it all to ourselves, and put bullets through apples stuck up on a stick, or smash an egg—”

“And knock over the parrots up in these trees.”

“I *will* have a gun,” said Bevis, kicking a stone with all his might. “Are you sure Frances could get Jack—”

“Frances get Jack to do it! Why, I’ve seen him kiss her foot.”

They got on board laughing and set the sails, but as the island kept the wind off, Mark had to row till they were beyond the cliff. Then the sails filled and away they went.

“Thessaly,” said Mark presently. “See! we’re getting to places where people live again. I say, shall we try the anchor?”

“Yes. Let down the mainsail first.”

Mark let it down, and then put the anchor over. It sank rapidly, drawing the cable after it. The flat stone in the shaft endeavoured as it sank to lie flat on the bottom, and this brought one of the flukes or points against the ground, and the motion of the boat dragging at it caused it to stick in a few inches. The cable tightened, and the boat brought up and swung with her stem to the wind. Mark found that they did not want all the cable; he hauled it in till there was only about ten feet out; so that, allowing for the angle, the water was not much more than five or six feet deep. They were off the muddy shore, lined with weeds. Rude as the anchor was, it answered perfectly. In a minute or two they hauled it up, set the mainsail, and sailed almost to the harbour, having to row the last few yards because the trees kept much of the breeze off. They unshipped the mast, and carried it and the sails home.

In the evening Mark set to work to shave another and somewhat longer pole for the new mast, and Bevis took the sails and some more canvas to Frances. He was not long gone, and when he returned said that Frances had promised to do the work immediately.

“Did you do the cat and mouse?” said Mark.
“Did you stare?”

“I stared,” said Bevis, “but there were some visitors there—”

“Stupes?”

“Stupes, so I couldn’t get on very well. She asked me what I was looking at, and if she wasn’t all right—”

“She meant her flounces; she thinks of nothing but her flounces. Some of the things are called gores.”

“But I began about the rifle, and she said perhaps, but she really had no influence with Jack.”

“O!” said Mark with a snort. “Another buster.”

“And she couldn’t think why you didn’t come home. She had forgiven you a long time, and you were always unkind to her, and she was always forgiving you.”

“Busters,” said Mark. “She’s on telling stories from morning to night.”

“I don’t see why you should be afraid of her; she can’t hurt you.”

“Not hurt me! Why if you’ve done anything—it’s niggle-niggle, niggle-naggle, and she’ll play you every nasty trick, and set the Old Moke on to look cross; and then when Jack comes, it’s ‘Mark, dear Mark,’ and wouldn’t you think she was a sweet darling who loved her brother!”

Mark tore off a shaving.

"One thing though," he added. "Won't she serve Jack out when he's got her and obliged to have her. As if I didn't know why she wants me to come home. All she wants is to send some letters to him."

"Postman. I see," said Bevis.

"But I'll go," said Mark. "I'll go and fetch the sails to-morrow. I should like to see the jolly Old Moke ; and don't you see ? if I take the letters she'll be pleased and get the rifle for us."

It was exceedingly disrespectful of Mark to speak of his governor as the Old Moke ; his actual behaviour was very different to his speech, for in truth he was most attached to his father. The following afternoon Mark walked over and got the sails, and as he had guessed Frances gave him a note for Jack, which he had to deliver that evening. They surprised the donkey ; Mark mounted and rode off.

Bevis went on with the mast and the new gaff and bowsprit, and when Mark got back about sunset he had the new mast and rigging fitted up in the shed to see how it looked. The first time they made a mast it took them a long while, but now, having learned exactly how to do it, the second had soon been prepared. The top rose above the beam

of the shed, and the mainsail stretched out under the eave.

“Hoist the peak up higher,” said the governor. Being so busy they had not heard him come. “Hoist it up well, Mark.”

Mark gave another pull at the halyard, and drew the peak, or point of the gaff, up till it stood at a sharp angle.

“The more peak you can get,” said the governor, “the more leverage the wind has, and the better she will answer the rudder.”

He was almost as interested in their sailing as they were themselves, and had watched them from the bank of the New Sea concealed behind the trees. But he considered it best that they should teach themselves, and find out little by little where they were wrong. Besides which he knew that the greatest pleasure is always obtained from inferior and incomplete instruments. Present a perfect yacht, a beautiful horse, a fine gun, or anything complete to a beginner, and the edge of his enjoyment is dulled with too speedy possession. The best way to learn to ride is on a rough pony, to sail in an open ill-built boat, because by encountering difficulties the learner comes to understand and appreciate the perfect instrument, and to wield or direct it with

fifty times more power than if he had been born to the purple.

From the shore the governor had watched them vainly striving to tack, and could but just refrain from pointing out the reason. When he saw them fitting up the enlarged sails and the new mast, he exulted almost as much as they did themselves. "They will do it," he said to himself, "they will do it this time."

Then to Bevis, "Pull the mainsail back as far as you can, and don't let it hollow out, not hollow and loose. Keep it taut. It ought be as flat as a board. There—" He turned away abruptly, fearing he had told them too much.

"As flat as a board," repeated Bevis. "So I will. But we thought it was best hollow, didn't we?" There was still enough light left to see to step the mast, so they carried the sails and rigging up to the boat, and fitted them the same evening.

CHAPTER IX.

SAILING CONTINUED—THE PINTA—NEW FORMOSA.

IN the morning the wind blew south, coming down the length of the New Sea. Though it was light and steady it brought larger waves than they had yet sailed in, because they had so far to roll. Still they were not half so high as the day of the battle, and came rolling slowly, with only a curl of foam now and then. The sails were set, and as they drifted rather than sailed out of the sheltered harbour, the boat began to rise and fall, to their intense delight.

“Now it’s proper sea,” said Mark.

“Keep ready,” said Bevis. “She’s going. We shall be across in two minutes.”

He hauled the mainsheet taut, and kept it as the governor had told him, as flat as a board. Smack! The bow hit a wave, and threw handfuls of water over Mark, who knelt on the ballast forward, ready

to work the foresheets. He shouted with joy, "It's sea, it's real sea!"

Smack! smack! His jacket was streaked and splotched with spray; he pushed his wet hair off his eyes. Sish! sish! with a bubbling hiss the boat bent over, and cut into the waves like a knife. So much more canvas drove her into the breeze, and as she went athwart the waves every third one rose over the windward bow like a fountain, up the spray flew, straight up, and then horizontally on Mark's cheek. There were wide dark patches on the sails where they were already wet.

Bevis felt the tiller press his hand like the reins with a strong fresh horse. It vibrated as the water parted from the rudder behind. The least movement of the tiller changed her course. Instead of having to hold the tiller in such a manner as to keep the boat's head up to the wind, he had now rather to keep her off, she wanted to fly in the face of the breeze, and he had to moderate such ardour. The broad mainsail taut, and flat as a board, strove to drive the bow up to windward.

"Look behind," said Mark. "Just see."

There was a wake of opening bubbles and foam, and the waves for a moment were smoothed by their swift progress. Opposite the harbour the New Sea

was wide, and it had always seemed a long way across, but they had hardly looked at the sails and the wake, and listened to the hissing and splashing, than it was time to tack.

“Ready,” said Bevis. “Let go.”

Mark let go, and the foresail bulged out and fluttered, offering no resistance to the wind. Bevis pushed the tiller over, and the mainsail having its own way at last drove the head of the boat into the wind, half round, three-quarters; now they faced it, and the boat pitched. The mainsail shivered; its edge faced the wind.

“Pull,” said Bevis the next moment.

Mark pulled the foresheet tight to the other side. It drew directly, and like a lever brought her head round, completing the turn. The mainsail flew across. Bevis hauled the sheet tight. She rolled, heaved, and sprang forward.

“Hurrah! We’ve done it! Hurrah!”

They shouted and kicked the boat. Wish! the spray flew, soaking Mark’s jacket the other side, filling his pocket with water, and even coming back as far as Bevis’s feet. Sish! sish! The wind puffed, and the rigging sang; the mast leaned; she showed her blue side; involuntarily they moved as near to windward as they could.

Wish! The lee gunwale slipped along, but just above the surface of the water, skimming like a swallow. Smack! Such a soaker. The foresail was wet; the bowsprit dipped twice. Swish! The mainsail was dotted with spray. Smack! Mark bent his head, and received it on his hat.

“Ready!” shouted the captain.

The foresheet slipped out of Mark’s hand, and flapped, and hit him like a whip till he caught the rope. The mainsail forced her up to the wind; the foresail tightened again levered her round. She rolled, heaved, and sprang forward.

Next time they did it better, and without a word being spoken. Mark had learned the exact moment to tighten the sheet, and she came round quicker than ever. In four tacks they were opposite the bluff, the seventh brought them to the council oak. As the wind blew directly down the New Sea each tack was just the same.

Bevis began to see that much depended upon the moment he chose for coming about, and then it did not always answer to go right across. If he waited till they were within a few yards of the shore the wind sometimes fell, the boat immediately lost weigh, or impetus, and though she came round it was

slowly, and before she began to sail again they had made a little leeway.

He found it best to tack when they were sailing full speed, because when he threw her head up to windward she actually ran some yards direct against the wind, and gained so much. Besides what they had gained coming aslant across the water at the end of the tack she shot up into the eye of the wind, and made additional headway like that. So that by watching the breeze, and seizing the favourable opportunity, he made much more than he would have done by merely travelling as far as possible.

The boat was badly built, with straight, stiff lines, a crank, awkward craft. She ought to have been a foot or so broader, and more swelling, when she would have swung round like a top.

Bevis might then have crossed to the very shore, though the wind lessened, without fear of leeway. But she came round badly even at the best. They thought she came round first-rate, but they were mistaken. Had she done so, she would have resumed the return course without a moment's delay, instead of staggering, rolling, heaving, and gradually coming to her work again. Bevis had to watch the breeze and coax her.

His eye was constantly on the sail, he felt the

tiller, handling it with a delicate touch like a painter's brush. He had to calculate and decide quickly whether there was space and time enough for the puff to come again before they reached the shore, or whether he had better sacrifice that end of the tack and come round at once. Sometimes he was wrong, sometimes right. In so narrow a space, and with such a boat, everything depended upon coming round well.

His workmanship grew better as they advanced. He seemed to feel all through the boat from rudder to mast, from the sheet in his hand to the bowsprit. The touch, the feeling of his hand, seemed to penetrate beyond the contact of the tiller, to feel through wood and rope as if they were a part of himself like his arm. He responded to the wind as quickly as the sail. If it fell, he let her off easier, to keep the pace up; if it blew, he kept her closer, to gain every inch with the increased impetus. He watched the mainsail hauled taut like a board, lest it should shiver. He watched the foresail, lest he should keep too close, and it should cease to draw. He stroked, and soothed, and caressed, and coaxed her, to put her best foot foremost.

Our captains have to coax the huge ironclads. With all the machinery, and the science, and the

elaboration, and the gauges, and the mathematically correct everything, the iron monsters would never come safe to an anchorage without the most exquisite coaxing. You must coax everything if you want to succeed; ironclads, fortune, Frances.

Bevis coaxed his boat, and suited her in all her little ways; now he yielded to her; now he waited for her; now he gave her her head and let her feel freedom; now, he hinted, was the best moment; suddenly his hand grew firm, and round she came.

Do you suppose he could have learnt wind and wave and to sail like that if he had had a perfect yacht as trim as the saucy *Arethusa* herself? Never. The crooked ways of the awkward craft brought out his ingenuity.

As they advanced the New Sea became narrower, till just before they came opposite the battlefield the channel was but a hundred yards or so wide. In these straits the waves came with greater force and quicker; they were no higher, but followed more quickly, and the wind blew harder, as if also confined. It was tack, tack, tack. No sooner were the sheets hauled, and they had begun to forge ahead, than they had to come about. Flap, flutter, pitch, heave, on again. Smack! smack! The spray flew over. Mark buttoned his jacket to his

throat, and jammed his hat down hard on his head.

The rope, or sheet, twisted once round Bevis's hand, cut into his skin, and made a red wale. He could not give it a turn round the cleat because there was no time. The mainsail pulled with almost all its force against his hand. Just as they had got the speed up, and a shower of spray was flying over Mark, round she had to come. Pitch, pitch, roll, heave forward, smack! splash! bubble, smack!

On the battlefield side Bevis could not go close to the shore because it was lined with a band of weeds; and on the other there were willow-bushes in the water, so that the actual channel was less than the distance from bank to bank. Each tack only gained a few yards, so that they crossed and recrossed nearly twenty times before they began to get through the strait. The sails were wet now, and drew the better; they worked in silence, but without a word, each had the same thought.

"It will do now," said Mark.

"Once more," said Bevis.

"Now," said Mark, as they had come round.

"Yes!"

From the westward shore Bevis kept her close

to the wind, and as the water opened out, he steered for Fir-Tree Gulf. He calculated that he should just clear the stony promontory. Against the rocky wall the waves dashed and rose up high above it, the spray was carried over the bank and into the quarry. The sand-bank or islet in front was concealed, the water running over it, but its site was marked by boiling surge.

The waves broke over it, and then met other waves thrown back from the wall; charging each other, they sprang up in pointed tips, which parted and fell. Over the grassy bank above rolled brown froth, which was then lifted and blown away. This was one of those places where the wind always seems to blow with greater force. In a gale from the southwest it was difficult to walk along the bank, and even now with only a light breeze the waves ran at the stony point as if they were mad. Bevis steered between Scylla and Charybdis, keeping a little nearer the sunken islet this time, the waves roared and broke on each side of them, froth caught against the sails, the boat shook as the reflux swept back and met the oncoming current; the rocky wall seemed to fly by, and in an instant they were past and in the gulf.

Hauling into the wind, the boat shot out from the

receding shore, and as they approached the firs they were already half across to the Nile. Returning, they had now a broad and splendid sea to sail in, and this tack took them up so far that next time they were outside the gulf. It was really sailing now, long tacks, or "legs," edging aslant up into the wind, and leaving the quarry far behind.

"It's splendid," said Mark. "Let me steer now."

Bevis agreed, and Mark crept aft on hands and knees, anxious not to disturb the trim of the boat; Bevis went forward and took his place in the same manner, buttoning his jacket and turning up his collar.

Mark steered quite as well. Bevis had learned how to work the boat, to coax her, from the boat and the sails themselves. Mark had learned from Bevis, and much quicker. It requires time, continued observation, and keenest perception to learn from nature. When one has thus acquired the art, others can learn from him in a short while and easily. Mark steered and handled the sheet, and brought her round as handily as if he had been at it all the time.

These lengthened zigzags soon carried them far up the broad water, and the farther they went the smaller the waves became, having so much the less distance to come, till presently they were but big

ripples, and the boat ceased to dance. As the waves did not now oppose her progress so much, there was but little spray, and she slipped through faster. The motive power, the wind, was the same; the opposing force, the waves, less. The speed increased, and they soon approached Bevis's island, having worked the whole distance up against the wind. They agreed to land, and Mark brought her to the very spot where they had got out before. Bevis doused the mainsail, leaped out, and tugged her well aground. After Mark had stepped ashore they careened the boat and baled out the water.

There was no tree or root sufficiently near to fasten the painter to, so they took out the anchor, carried it some way inland, and forced one of the flukes into the ground. The boat was quite safe and far enough aground not to drift off, but it was not proper to leave a ship without mooring her. Mark wanted to go and look at the place he thought so well adapted for a cave, so they walked through between the bushes, when he suddenly remembered that the vessel in which they had just accomplished so successful a voyage had not got a name.

"The ship ought to have a name," he said. "Blue boat sounds stupid."

"So she ought," said Bevis. "Why didn't we think

of it before? There's Arethusa, Agamemnon, Sandusky, Orient—"

"Swallow, Viking, St. George—but that won't do," said Mark. "Those are ships that sail now and some have steam; what were old ships—"

"Argo," said Bevis. "I wonder what was the name of Ulysses' ship—"

"I know," said Mark, "Pinta—that's it. One of Columbus's ships, you know. He was the first to go over there, and we're the first on the New Sea."

"So we are; it shall be Pinta, I'll paint it, and the island ought to have a name too."

"Of course. Let's see: Tahiti?" said Mark.

"Loo-choo?"

"Celebes?"

"Carribbees?"

"Cyclades? But those are a lot of islands, aren't they?"

"Formosa is a good name," said Bevis. "It sounds right. But I don't know where it is—it's somewhere."

"Don't matter—call it New Formosa."

"Capital," said Bevis. "The very thing; there's New Zealand and New Guinea. Right. It's New Formosa."

"Or the Land of Magic."

“New Formosa or the Magic Land,” said Bevis. “I’ll write it down on the map we made when we get home.”

“Here’s the place,” said Mark. “This is where the cave ought to be,” pointing at a spot where the sandy cliff rose nearly perpendicular; “and then we ought to have a hut over it.”

“Poles stuck in and leaning down and thatched.”

“Yes, and a palisade of thick stakes stuck in, in front of the door.”

“So that no one could take us by surprise at night.”

“And far enough off for us to have our fire inside.”

“Twist bushes in between the stakes.”

“Quite impassable to naked savages.”

“How high?”

“Seven feet.”

“Or very nearly.”

“We could make a bed, and sleep all night.”

“Wouldn’t it be splendid to stop here altogether?”

“First-rate; no stupid sillinesses.”

“No bother.”

“Have your dinner when you like.”

“Nobody to bother where you’ve been to.”

“Let’s live here.”

“All right. Only we must have a gun to shoot birds and things to eat,” said Bevis. “It’s no use unless we have a gun; it’s not proper, nor anything.”

“No more it is,” said Mark; “we *must* have a gun. Go and stare at Frances.”

“But it takes such a time, and then you know how slow Jack is. It would take him three months to make up his mind to lend us the rifle.”

“So it would,” said Mark; “Jack’s awful slow, like his old mill-wheel up there.”

“Round and round,” said Bevis. “Boom and splash and rumble”—swinging his arm—“round and round, and never get any farther.”

“Not an inch,” said Mark. “Stop; there’s Tom’s gun.” He meant the bird-keeper’s.

“Pooh!” said Bevis, “that’s rotten old rusty rubbish. Isn’t there anybody we could borrow one of?”

“Nobody,” said Mark; “they’re all so stupid and afraid.”

“Donks.”

“Awful donks! Let’s sell our watches, and buy one,” said Mark. “Only they would ask what we had done with our watches.”

“I know,” said Bevis, suddenly kicking up his heels, then standing on one foot and spinning round —“I know!”

“What is it! Quick! Tell me!”

“Make one,” said Bevis.

“Make one?”

“A matchlock,” said Bevis. “Make a matchlock. And a matchlock is quite proper, and just what they used to have—”

“But the barrel?”

“Buy an iron tube,” said Bevis. “They have lots at Latten, at the ironmonger’s; buy an iron pipe, and stop one end—”

“I see,” said Mark. “Hurrah!” and up went his heels, and there was a wild capering for half a minute.

“The bother is to make the breech,” said Bevis. “It ought to screw, but we can’t do that.”

“Ask the blacksmith,” said Mark; “we need not let him know what it’s for.”

“If he doesn’t know we’ll find out somehow,” said Bevis. “Come on, let’s do it directly. Why didn’t we think of it before.”

They returned towards the boat.

“Just won’t it be splendid,” said Mark. “First, we’ll get everything ready, and then get shipwrecked proper, and be as jolly as anything.”

“Matchlocks are capital guns,” said Bevis; “they’re slow to shoot with, you know, but they kill

better than rifles. They have long barrels, and you put them on a rest to take steady aim, and we'll have an iron ramrod too, so as not to have the bother of making a place to put the rod in the stock, and to ram down bullets to shoot the tigers or savages."

"Jolly!"

"The stock must be curved," said Bevis; "not like the guns, broad and flat, but just curved, and there must be a thing to hold the match; and just remind me to buy a spring to keep the hammer up, so that it shall not fall till we pull the trigger—it's just opposite to other guns, don't you see? The spring is to keep the match up, and you pull against the spring. And there's a pan and a cover to it—a bit of tin would do capital—and you push it open with your thumb. I've seen lots of matchlocks in glass cases, all inlaid gold and silver."

"We don't want that."

"No all we want is the shooting. The match is the bother—"

"Would tar-cord do?"

"We'll try; first let's make the breech. Take up the anchor."

Mark picked up the anchor, and put it on board. They launched the *Pinta*, and set sail homewards,

Mark steering. As they were running right before the wind, the ship went at a great pace.

“That’s the Mozambique,” said Bevis, as they passed through the strait where they had had to make so many tacks before.

“Land ho!” said Mark, as they approached the harbour. “We’ve had a capital sail.”

“First-rate,” said Bevis. “But let’s make the matchlock.”

Now that he had succeeded in tacking he was eager to go on to the next thing, especially the matchlock-gun. The hope of shooting made him three times as ready to carry out Mark’s plan of the cave on the island. After furling the sails, and leaving everything ship-shape, they ran home and changed their jackets, which were soaked.

CHAPTER X.

MAKING A GUN—THE CAVE.

TALKING upstairs about the barrel of the gun, they began to think it would be an awkward thing to bring home, people would look at them walking through the town with an iron pipe, and when they had got it home, other people might ask what it was for. Presently Mark remembered that John Young went to Latten that day with the horse and cart to fetch things ; now if they bought the tube, Young could call for it, and bring it in the cart and leave it at his cottage. Downstairs they ran, and up to the stables, and as they came near, heard the stamp of a cart-horse, as it came over. Mark began to whistle the tune,—

“John Young went to town
On a little pony,
Stuck a feather in his hat,
And called him Macaroni.”

“Macaroni!” said he, as they looked in at the stable-door. “Macaroni” did not answer; the leather of the harness creaked as he moved it.

“Macaroni!” shouted Mark. He did not choose to reply to such a nickname.

“John!” said Bevis.

“Eez—eez,” replied the man, looking under the horse’s neck, and meaning “Yes, yes.”

“Fetch something for us,” said Mark.

“Pint?” said John laconically.

“Two,” said Bevis.

“Ar-right,” [“all right”] said John, his little brown eyes twinkling. “Ar-right, you.” For a quart of ale there were few things he would not have done: for a gallon his soul would not have had a moment’s consideration, if it had stood in the way.

Bell, book, and candle shall not drive me back
When pewter tankard beckons to come on!

They explained to him what they wanted him to do.

“Have you got a grate in your house?” said Bevis.

“A yarth,” said John, meaning an open hearth. “Burns wood.”

“Can you make a hot fire—very hot on it?”

“Rayther. Bellers.” By using the bellows.

“What could we have for an anvil?”

“Be you going a blacksmithing?”

“Yes—what will do for an anvil?”

“Iron quarter,” said John. “There’s an ould iron in the shed. Shall I take he whoam?” An iron quarter is a square iron weight weighing 28 lbs.: it would make a useful anvil. It was agreed that he should do so, and they saw him put the old iron weight, rusty and long disused, up in the cart.

“If you wants anybody to blow the bellers,” said he, “there’s our Loo—she’ll blow for yer. Be you going to ride?”

“No,” said Bevis; “we’ll go across the fields.”

Away they went by the meadow foot-path, a shorter route to the little town, and reached it before John and his cart. At the ironmonger’s they examined a number of pipes, iron and brass tubes. The brass looked best, and tempted them, but on turning it round they fancied the join showed, and was not perfect, and of course that would not do. Nor did it look so strong as the iron, so they chose the iron, and bought five feet of a stout tube—the best in the shop—with a bore of $\frac{5}{8}$ ths; and after-

wards a brass rod, which was to form the ram-rod. Brass would not cause a spark in the barrel.

John called for these in due course, and left them at his cottage. The old rogue had his quart, and the promise of a shilling, if the hearth answered for the blacksmithing. In the evening, Mark, well primed as to what he was to ask, casually looked in at the blacksmith's down the hamlet. The blacksmith was not in the least surprised; they were both old frequenters; he was only surprised one or both had not been before.

Mark pulled some of the tools about, lifted the sledge which stood upright, and had left it's mark on the iron "scale" which lay on the ground an inch deep. Scale consists of minute particles which fly off red-hot iron when it is hammered—the sparks, in fact, which, when they go out, fall, and are found to be metal; like the meteors in the sky, the scale shooting from Vulcan's anvil, which go out and drop on the earth. Mark lifted the sledge, put it down, twisted up the vice, and untwisted it, while Jonas, the smith, stood blowing the bellows with his left hand, and patting the fire on the forge with his little spud of a shovel.

"Find anything you want," he said presently.

"I'll take this," said Mark. "There's sixpence."

He had chosen a bit of iron rod, short, and thicker than their ramrod. Bevis had told him what to look for.

“All right, sir—anything else?”

“Well,” said Mark, moving towards the door, “I don’t know,”—then stopping with an admirable assumption of indifference. “Suppose you had to stop up one end of a pipe, how should you do it?”

“Make it white-hot,” said the smith. “Bring it to me.”

“Will white-hot shut tight?”

“Quite tight—it runs together when hit. Bring it to me. I say, where’s the punt?” grinning. His white teeth gleamed between his open lips—a row of ivory set in a grimy face.

“The punt’s at the bottom,” said Mark, with a louring countenance.

“Nice boys,” said the smith. “You’re very nice boys. If you was mine—” He took up a slender ash plant that was lying on the bench, and made it ply and whistle in the air.

Mark tossed his chin, kicked the door open, and walked off.

“I say!—I say!” shouted the smith. “Bring it to me.”

“Keep yourself to yourself,” said Mark loftily.

Boys indeed! The smith swore, and it sounded in his broad deep chest like the noise of the draught up the furnace. He was angry with himself—he thought he had lost half-a-crown, at least, by just swishing the stick up and down. If you want half-a-crown, you must control your feelings.

Mark told Bevis what the smith had said, and they went to work, and the same evening filed off the end of the rod Mark had bought. Bevis's plan was to file this till it almost fitted the tube, but not quite. Then he meant to make the tube red-hot—almost white—and insert the little block. He knew that heat would cause the tube to slightly enlarge, so that the block being cold could be driven in; then as the tube cooled it would shrink in and hold it tight, so that none of the gas of the powder could escape.

The block was to be driven in nearly half an inch below the rim; the rim was to be next made quite white-hot, and in that state hammered over till it met in the centre, and overlapped a little. Again made white-hot, the overlapping (like the paper of a paper tube doubled in) was to be hammered and solidly welded together. The breech would then be firmly closed, and there would not be the slightest

chance of its blowing out. This was his own idea, and he explained it to Mark.

They had now to decide how long the barrel should be : they had bought rather more tube than they wanted. Five, or even four feet would be so long, the gun would be inconvenient to handle, though with a rest, and very heavy. In a barrel properly built up, the thickness gradually decreases from the breech to the muzzle, so that as the greatest weight is nearest the shoulder the gun balances. But this iron tube was the same thickness from one end to the other, and in consequence, when held up horizontally, it seemed very heavy at the farther extremity.

Yet they wanted a long barrel, else it would not be like a proper matchlock. Finally, they fixed on forty inches, which would be long, but not too long ; with a barrel of three feet four inches they ought, they considered, to be able to kill at a great distance. Adding the stock, say fifteen inches, the total length would be four feet seven.

Next morning, taking their tools and a portable vice in a flag-basket, as they often did to the boat, they made a détour and went to John Young's cottage. On the door-step there sat a little girl without shoes or stockings ; her ragged frock was

open at her neck. At first, she looked about twelve years old, as the original impression of age is derived from height and size. In a minute or two she grew older, and was not less than fourteen. The rest of the family were in the fields at work, Loo had been left to wait upon them. Already she had a huge fire burning on the hearth, which was of brick; the floor too was brick. With the door wide open they could hardly stand the heat till the flames had fallen. Bevis did not want so much flame; embers are best to make iron hot. Taking off their jackets they set to work, put the tube in the fire, arranged the anvil, screwed the vice to the deal table, which, though quite clean, was varnished with grease that had sunk into the wood, selected the hammer which they thought would suit, and told Loo to fetch them her father's hedging-gloves.

These are made of thick leather, and Mark thought he could hold the tube better with them, as it would be warm from one end to the other. The little block of iron, to form the breech, was filed smooth, so as to just *not* fit the tube. When the tube was nearly white-hot, Mark put on the leather gloves, seized and placed the colder end on the anvil, standing the tube with the glowing end upwards.

Bevis took the iron block, or breech-piece, with his

pincers, inserted it in the white-hot tube, and drove it down with a smart tap. Some scale fell off and dropped on Mark's shirt-sleeve, burning little holes through to his skin. He drew his breath between his teeth, so sudden and keen was the pain of the sparks, but did not flinch. Bevis hastily threw his jacket over Mark's arms, and then gave the block three more taps, till it was flush with the top of the tube.

By now the tube was cooling, the whiteness superseded by a red, which gradually became dull. Mark put the tube again in the fire, and Loo was sent to find a piece of sacking to protect his arm from the sparks. His face was not safe, but he had sloped his hat over it, and held his head down. There were specks on his hat where the scale or sparks had burnt it. Loo returned with a sack, when Bevis, who had been thinking, discovered a way by which Mark might escape the sparks.

He pulled the table along till the vice fixed to it projected over the anvil. Next time Mark was to stand the tube upright just the same, but to put it in the vice, and tighten the vice quickly, so that he need not hold it. Bevis had a short punch to drive the block or breech-piece deeper into the tube. Loo, blowing at the embers, with her scorched face close

to the fire, declared that the tube was ready. Mark drew it out, and in two seconds it was fixed in the vice, but with the colder end in contact with the anvil underneath. Bevis put his punch on the block and tapped it sharply till he had forced it half an inch beneath the rim.

He now adjusted it for the next heating himself, for he did not wish all the end of the tube to be so hot; he wanted the end itself almost white-hot, but not the rest. While it was heating they went out of doors to cool themselves, leaving Loo to blow steadily at the embers. She watched their every motion as intent as a cat a mouse; she ran with her naked brown feet to fetch and carry; she smiled when Mark put on the leather gloves, for she would have held it with her hands, though it had been much hotter.

She would have put her arm on the anvil to receive a blow from the hammer; she would have gone down the well in the bucket if they had asked her. Her mind was full of this wonderful work—what could they be making? But her heart and soul was filled with these great big boys with their beautiful sparkling eyes and white arms, white as milk, and their wilful, imperious ways. How many times she had watched them from afar! To have

them so near was almost too great a joy ; she was like a slave under their feet ; they regarded her less than the bellows in her hands.

Directly the tube was white-hot at the extremity, she called them. Mark set the tube up ; Bevis carefully hammered the rim over, folding it down on the breech block. Another heating, and he hammered the yielding metal still closer together, welding the folds. A third heating, and he finished it, deftly levelling the projections. The breech was complete, and it was much better done than they had hoped. As it cooled the tube shrank on the block ; the closed end of the tube shrank too, and the breech-piece was incorporated into the tube itself. Their barrel was indeed far safer at the breech than scores of the brittle guns turned out cheap in these days.

Loo, seeing them begin to put their tools in the flag-basket, asked, with tears in her eyes, if they were not going to do any more ? They had been there nearly three hours, for each heating took some time, but it had not seemed ten minutes to her. Bevis handed the barrel to her, and told her to take great care of it ; they would come for it at night. It was necessary to smuggle it up into the armoury at home, and that could not be done by

day. She took it. Had he given it in charge of a file of soldiers it could not have been safer; she would watch it as a bird does her nest.

Just then John came in, partly for his luncheon, partly out of curiosity to see how they were getting on. "Picters you be!" said John.

Pictures they were—black and grimy, not so much from the iron as the sticks and logs, half burnt, which they had handled; they were, in fact, streaked and smudged with charcoal. Loo instantly ran for a bowl of water for them to wash, and held the towel ready. She watched them down the hill, and wished they had kicked her or pulled her hair. Other boys did; why did not they touch her? They might have done so. Next time she thought she would put her naked foot so that they would step on it; then if she cried out perhaps they would stroke her.

In the afternoon they took two spades up to the boat. The wind had fallen as usual, but they rowed to New Formosa. The Pinta being deep in the water and heavy with ballast, moved slowly, and it was a long row. Mark cut two sticks, and these were driven into the face of the sand cliff, to show the outline of the proposed cave. It was to be five feet square, and as deep as they could dig it.

They cleared away the loose sand and earth at the foot in a few minutes, and began the excavation. The sand at the outside was soft and crumbled, but an inch deep it became harder, and the work was not anything like so easy as they had supposed. After pecking with the spades for a whole hour, each had only cut out a shallow hole.

“This is no good,” said Mark; “we shall never do it like this.”

“Pickaxes,” said Bevis.

“Yes; and hatchets,” said Mark. “We could chop this sand best.”

“So we could,” said Bevis. “There are some old hatchets in the shed; we’ll sharpen them; they’ll do.”

They worked on another half-hour, and then desisted, and cutting some more sticks stuck them in the ground in a semicircle before the cliff, to mark where the palisade was to be fixed. The New Sea was still calm, and they had to row through the Mozambique all the way to the harbour.

In the evening they ground two old hatchets, which, being much worn and chipped, had been thrown aside, and then searched among the quantities of stored and seasoned wood and poles for a piece to make the stock of the matchlock. There was

beech, oak, elm, ash, fir—all sorts of wood lying about in the shed and workshop. Finally, they selected a curved piece of ash, hard and well seasoned. The curve was nearly what was wanted, and being natural it would be much stronger. This was carried up into the armoury to be shaved and planed into shape.

At night they went for the barrel. Loo brought it, and Bevis, as he thought, accidentally stepped on her naked foot, crushing it between his heel and the stones at the door. Loo cried out.

“O dear!” said he, “I am so sorry. Here—here’s sixpence, and I’ll send you some pears.”

She put the sixpence in her mouth and bit it, and said nothing. She indented the silver with her teeth, disappointed because he had not stroked her, while she stood and watched them away.

They smuggled the barrel up into the armoury, which was now kept more carefully locked than ever, and they even put it where no one could see it through the keyhole. In the morning, as there was a breeze from the westward, they put the hatchets on board the *Pinta*, and sailed away for New Formosa. The wind was partly favourable, and they reached the island in three tacks. The hatchets answered much better, cutting out the sand

well, so that there soon began to be two holes in the cliff.

They worked a little way apart, each drilling a hole straight in, and intending to cut away the intervening wall afterwards, else they could not both work at once. By dinner-time there was a heap of excavated sand and two large holes. The afternoon and evening they spent at work on the gun. Mark shaved at the stock ; Bevis filed a touch-hole to the barrel ; he would have liked to have drilled the touch-hole, but that he could not do without borrowing the blacksmith's tools, and they did not want him to know what they were about.

For four days they worked with their digging at the cave in the morning, and making the matchlock all the rest of the day. The stock was now ready—it was simply curved and smoothed with sand-paper, they intended afterwards to rub it with oil, till it took a little polish like the handles of axes. The stock was almost as long as the barrel, which fitted into a groove in it, and was to be fastened in with copper wire when all was ready.

Bevis at first thought to cut a mortise in the handle of the stock to insert the lock, but on consideration he feared it would weaken the stock, so he chiselled a place on the right side where the lock could be

counter-sunk. The right side of the stock had been purposely left somewhat thicker for the pan. The pan was a shallow piece of tin screwed on the stock and sunk in the wood, one end closed, the other to be in contact with the barrel under the touch-hole. In this pan the priming was to be placed. Another piece of tin working on a pivot formed of a wire nail (these nails are round) was to cover the pan like a slide or lid, and keep the priming from dropping out or being blown off by the wind.

Before firing, the lid would have to be pushed aside by the thumb, and the outer corner of it was curled over like a knob for the thumb-nail to press against. The lock was most trouble, and they had to make many trials before they succeeded. In the end it was formed of a piece of thick iron wire. This was twisted round itself in the centre, so that it would work on an axle or pivot.

It was then heated red-hot, and beaten flat or nearly, this blacksmith's work they could do at home, for no one could have guessed what it was for. One end was bent, so that though fixed at the side of the stock, it would come underneath for the trigger, for in a matchlock trigger and hammer are in a single piece. The other end curved over to hold the match, and this caused Bevis some more

thought, for he could not split it like the match-holders of the Indian matchlocks he had seen in cases.

Bevis drew several sketches to try and get at it, and at last twisted the end into a spiral of two turns. The match, which is a piece of cord prepared to burn slowly, was to be inserted in the spiral, the burning end slightly projecting, and as at the spiral the iron had been beaten thin, if necessary it could be squeezed with thumb and finger to hold the cord tighter, but Bevis did not think it would be necessary to do that.

Next the spring was fixed behind, and just above the trigger end in such a way as to hold the hammer end up. Pulling the trigger you pulled against the spring, and the moment the finger was removed the hammer sprang up—this was to keep the lighted match away from the priming till the moment of firing. The completed lock was covered with a plate of brass screwed on, and polished till it shone brightly. Bevis was delighted after so much difficulty to find that it worked perfectly. The brass ramrod had been heated at one end, and enlarged there by striking it while red-hot, which caused the metal to bulge, and they now proceeded to prove the barrel before fastening it in the stock.

CHAPTER XI.

BUILDING THE HUT.

POWDER was easily got from Latten; they bought a pound of loose powder at three halfpence the ounce. This is like black dust, and far from pure, for if a little be flashed off on paper or white wood it leaves a broad smudge, but it answered their purpose very well. While Bevis was fretting and fuming over the lock, for he got white-hot with impatience, though he would and did do it, Mark had made a powder-horn by sawing off the pointed end of a cow's horn, and fitting a plug of wood into the mouth. For their shot they used a bag, and bought a mould for bullets.

The charger to measure the powder was a brass drawn cartridge-case, two of which Mark had chanced to put in his pocket while they were at Jack's. It held more than a charge, so they scratched a line inside to show how far it was to be filled. At night

the barrel was got out of the house, and taken up the meadows, three fields away, to a mound they had chosen as the best place. Mark brought a lantern, which they did not light till they arrived, and then put it behind the bushes, so that the light should not show at a distance.

The barrel was now charged with three measures of powder and two of shot rammed down firm, and then placed on the ground in front of a tree. From the touch-hole a train of powder was laid along the dry ground round the tree, so that the gun could be fired while the gunner was completely protected in case the breech blew out.

A piece of tar-cord was inserted in a long stick split at the end. Mark wished to fire the train, and having lit the tar-cord, which burned well, he stood back as far as he could and dropped the match on the powder. Puff—bang! They ran forward, and found the barrel was all right. The shot had scored a groove along the mound and lost itself in the earth; the barrel had kicked back to the tree, but it had not burst or bulged, so that they felt it would be safe to shoot with. Such a thickness of metal, indeed, would have withstood a much greater strain, and their barrel, rude as it was, was far safer than many flimsy guns.

The last thing to be made was the rest. For the staff they found a straight oak rod up in the lumber-room, which had once been used as a curtain-rod to an old fashioned four-poster. Black with age it was hard and rigid, and still strong; the very thing for their rest. The fork for the barrel to lie in was a difficulty, till Bevis hit on the plan of forming it of two pieces of thick iron wire. These were beaten flat at one end, a hole was bored in the top of the staff, and the two pieces of wire driven in side by side, when their flatness prevented them from moving. The wires were then drawn apart and hammered and bent into a half-circle on which the stock would rest.

The staff was high enough for them to shoot standing, but afterwards it was shortened, as they found it best to aim kneeling on one knee. When the barrel was fastened in the stock by twisting copper wire round, it really looked like a gun, and they jumped and danced about the bench-room till the floor shook. After handling it for some time they took it to pieces, and hid it till the cave should be ready, for so long a weapon could not be got out of the house very easily, except in sections. Not such a great while previously they had felt that they must not on any account touch gunpowder, yet now they handled it and prepared to shoot without the least hesitation.

The idea had grown up gradually. Had it come all at once it would have been rejected, but it had grown so imperceptibly that they had become accustomed to it, and never questioned themselves as to what they were doing.

Absorbed in the details and the labour of constructing the matchlock, the thinking and the patience, the many trials, the constant effort had wore away every other consideration but that of success. The labour made the object legitimate. They gloried in their gun, and in fact, though so heavy, it was a real weapon capable of shooting, and many a battle in the olden times was won with no better. Bevis was still making experiments, soaking cord in various compositions of saltpetre, to discover the best slow match.

By now the cave began to look like a cave, for every morning, sailing or rowing to New Formosa, they chopped for two or three hours at the hard sand. This cave was Mark's idea, but once started at work Bevis became as eager as he, and they toiled like miners. After the two headings had been driven in about five feet, they cut away the intervening wall, and there was a cavern five feet square, large enough for both to sit down in.

They had intended to dig in much deeper, but the

work was hard, and, worse than that, slow, and now the matchlock was ready they were anxious to get on the island. So they decided that the cave was now large enough to be their store-room, while they lived in the hut, to be put up over the entrance. Bevis drew a sketch of the hut several times, trying to find out the easiest way of constructing it. The plan they selected was to insert long poles in the sand about three feet higher up than the top of the cave. These were to be placed a foot apart; and there were to be nine of them, all stuck in holes made for the purpose in a row, thus covering a space eight feet wide and eight high. From the cliff the rafters were to slope downwards till the lower and outward ends were six feet above the ground. That would give the roof a fall of two feet in case of rain.

Two stout posts were to be put up with a long beam across, on which the outer ends of the rafters were to rest. Two lesser posts in the middle were to mark the doorway. The roof was to be covered with brushwood to some thickness, and then thatched over that with sedges and reed-grass.

The walls they meant to make of hurdles stood on end, and fastened with tar-cord to upright stakes. Outside the hurdles they intended to pile up furze, brushwood, faggots, bundles of sedges—anything, in

short. A piece of old carpeting was to close the door as a curtain. The store-room was five feet square, the hut would be eight, so that with the two they thought they should have plenty of space.

The semi-circular fence or palisade starting from the cliff on one side, and coming to it on the other, of the hut was to have a radius of ten yards, and so enclose a good piece of ground, where they could have their fire and cook their food secure from wild beasts or savages. A gateway in the fence was to be just wide enough to squeeze through, and to be closed by two boards nailed to a frame.

It took some time to settle all these details, for Bevis would not begin till he had got everything complete in his mind, but the actual work did not occupy nearly so long as the digging of the cave. There were plenty of poles growing on the island, which Mark cut down with Bevis's own hatchet, not the blunt ones they had used for excavating, but the one with which he had chopped at the trees in the Peninsula.

As Mark cut them down, some ash, some willow, and a few alder, Bevis stripped off the twigs with a billhook, and shortened them to the proper length. All the poles were ready in one morning, and in the afternoon coming again they set up the two stout corner posts. Next day the rafters were fitted, they

had to bring a short ladder to get at the cliff over the mouth of the cave. Then the hurdles were brought and set up, and the brushwood cut and thrown on the top.

Sedges grew in quantities at the other end of the island, where the ground sloped till it became level with the water. In cutting them they took care to leave an outer fringe standing, so that if any one passed, or by any chance looked that way from the shore, he should not see that the sedges had been reaped. They covered the roof two feet thick with brushwood, sedges, and reed-grass, which they considered enough to keep out any ordinary shower.

Of course if the tornadoes common to these tropical countries should come they must creep into the inner cave. Against such fearful storms no thatch they could put up would protect them. The walls took a whole day to finish, as it required such a quantity of brushwood, and it had to be fastened in its place with rods, thrust into the ground, and tied at the top to the outside rafters.

At last the hut was finished, and they could stand up, or walk about in it; but when the carpet-curtain was dropped, it was dark, for they had forgotten to make a window. But in the day-time they would not want one, as the curtain could be thrown aside,

and the doorway would let in plenty of light, as it faced the south. At night they would have a lantern hung from the roof.

"It's splendid," said Mark; "we could live here for years."

"Till we forgot what day it was, and whether it was Monday or Saturday," said Bevis.

"And our beards grow down to our waists." Their chins were as smooth as possible.

"Ships would be sent out to search for us."

"And when we come home everybody would come to see us," said Mark. "Just think of all the wonders we shall have to tell them!"

"I wish Ted could see it," said Bevis, "and Charlie, and Val."

"Wouldn't they be jealous if they knew," said Mark. "They'd kill us if we did not let them come too."

"It's a great secret," said Bevis; "we must be very careful. There may be mines of gold in this island, don't you see?"

"Diamonds."

"There's a pearl fishery, I'm sure."

"Birds of Paradise."

"Spices and magic things."

"It's the most wonderful island ever found out."

“ Hurrah ! ”

“ Let’s have a sail.”

“ So we will.”

“ Not work any more this afternoon.”

“ No ; let’s sail up farther—”

“ Beyond the island ? ”

“ Yes ; unknown seas, don’t you know. Come on.”

Away they ran to the *Pinta*. The wind lately had blown lightly from the east, and continued all day. These light easterly summer breezes are a delight to those who watch the corn, for they mean fine weather and full wheat-ears. Mark took the tiller, and they sailed southwards through the channel, between New Formosa and Serendib. Not far beyond, Bevis, looking over the side, saw the sunken punt. She was lying in six or seven feet of water, but the white streak on her gunwale could be clearly seen. He told Mark.

“ I hope the governor won’t get her up yet,” said Mark. “ Lucky he’s so busy—”

“ Why ? ”

“ Don’t you see,” said shrewd Mark, “ while the punt’s at the bottom nobody can come to our island to see what we’re at.”

“ Ah ! ” said Bevis. “ What a jolly good thing I was shipwrecked.”

As they went southwards they passed several small islands or sand-banks, and every now and then a summer snipe flew up and circled round them, just above the water, returning to the same spot.

"Those are the Coral Isles," said Bevis. "They're only just above the surface."

"Tornadoes would sweep right over them," said Mark. "That's why there are no cocoa-nut trees."

Another sand-bank some way on the left they named Grey Crow Island, because a grey or hooded crow rose from it.

"Do you see any weeds?" said Mark presently. "You know that's a sign of land."

"Some," said Bevis, looking over the side into the ripples. "They are brown and under water; I suppose it's too deep for them to come to the top."

The light breeze carried them along pleasantly, though slowly.

"Swallows," said Bevis; "I can see some swallows, high up, there. That's another sign of land."

"Heave the lead," said Mark.

"We've forgotton it; how stupid! Mind you remember it next time."

New Formosa was a long way in the rear now.

"That's Pearl Island," said Mark, pointing to a

larger sand-bank. "Can't you see the shells glistening; it's mother-of-pearl."

"So it is."

The crows had carried the mussels up on the islet, and left the shells strewn about. The inner part reflected the sunlight. If examined closely there are prismatic colours.

"There's that curious wave," said Mark, standing up and pointing to an undulation of the water on the other side of a small patch of green weeds. The undulation went away from them till they lost sight of it. "What is it?"

"There are all sorts of curious things in the tropic seas," said Bevis. "Some of them are not found out even yet. Nobody can tell what it is."

"Perhaps it's magic," said Mark.

"Lots of magic goes on in the south," said Bevis. "I believe we're very nearly on the equator; just feel how hot the gunwale is"—the wood was warm from the sunshine—"and the sun goes overhead every day, and it's so light at night. We will bring the astrolabe and take an observation—I say!"

The Pinta brought up with a sudden jerk. They had run on a shoal.

"Wrecked!" shouted Mark joyfully. "But there are no waves. It's no good with these ripples."

Bevis pushed the Pinta off with a scull, and so feeling the bottom, told Mark to ease the tiller and sail more to the right. Two minutes afterwards they grounded again, and again pushed off. On the left, or eastern side, they saw a broad channel leading up through the weeds. Bevis told Mark to tack up there. Mark did so, and they slowly advanced with the weeds each side. The tacks were short, and as the wind was so light they made little progress. Presently the channel turned south; then they ran faster; next it turned sharp to the east, and came back. In trying to tack here Mark ran into the weeds.

“Stupe!” said Bevis.

“That I’m not,” said Mark. “You can’t do it.”

“Can’t I?” said Bevis contemptuously.

“Try then,” said Mark, and he left the tiller. Bevis took it and managed two tacks very well. At the third he too ran into the weeds, for in fact the channel was so narrow there was no time to get weigh on the ship.

“Stupe yourself,” said Mark.

He tried to row out, but every time he got a pull the wind blew them back, and they had to let the mainsail down.

“It wants a canoe,” said Bevis.

"Of course it does. It's no use going on unless you're going to row."

"No; but look!" Bevis pointed to a small branch which was floating very slowly past them.

"There's a current," said Mark.

"River," said Bevis. "In the sedges somewhere."

"What is it? I know; it's the Orinoco."

"No, I don't think so."

"Amazon?"

"No."

"Hoang-Ho?"

"How can we tell, till we get the astrolabe and take an observation? Most likely it's a new river, the biggest ever found."

"It must be a new river," said Mark. "This is the New Sea. We're drifting back a little."

"We'll come again in a canoe, or something," said Bevis.

They rowed out of the channel, set the mainsail, and sailed back, past Pearl Island, Grey Crow Island, the Coral Isles, and approached New Formosa. Mark looked over the side, and watched to see the sunken punt.

"It's a wreck," said he presently, as they passed above the punt. "She foundered."

“It’s a Spanish galley,” said Bevis. “She’s full of bullion, gold and silver—”

“Millions of broad gold pieces.”

“Doubloons.”

“Pistoles.”

“Ingots.”

“You can see the skeletons chained at the oar-benches.”

“Yes—just as they went down.”

“There are strange sounds here at night.”

“Bubbles come up, and shouts, and awful shrieks.”

“Hope we shan’t hear them when we’re in our hut.”

“No ; it’s too far.”

They sailed between New Formosa and Serendib, and homewards through Mozambique to the harbour. The east wind, like the west, was a there-and-back wind, and they could reach their island, or return from it, in two or three tacks, sometimes in one stretch.

CHAPTER XII.

PROVISIONING THE CAVE.

NEXT day they took an iron bar with them, and pitched the stakes for the fence or stockade. Between the stakes they wove in willow rods and brushwood, so that thus bound together, it was much stronger than it looked, and no one could have got in without at least making a great noise. The two boards, nailed together for the gate, were fastened on one side to a stouter stake with small chains like rude hinges. On the other there was a staple and small padlock.

“It’s finished,” said Mark, as he turned the key and locked them in.

“No,” said Bevis, “there’s the bedstead. The ground’s dry” (it was sand), “but it’s not proper to sleep on the ground.”

They put off preparing the bedstead till next day, when they approached on a spanking south-

east wind—half a breeze—against which they had to tack indeed, but spun along at a good speed. The waves were not large enough to make the *Pinta* roll, but some spray came over now and then.

“It’s almost shipwreck weather,” said Mark. “Just see—” He pointed at the cliff where there was a little splashing, as the waves swept sideways along the base of the cliff. “If you run her against the cliff the bowsprit will be knocked in. Would the mast go by the board?”

“Not enough wind,” said Bevis, as he steered past, and they landed at the usual place. The bedstead was made by placing five or six thick poles sawn off at four feet on the floor on the left side of the hut, like the sleepers of a railway. Across these lengthways they laid lesser rods, then still more slender rods crossways, and on these again boughs of spruce fir, one on the other to a foot or more in depth. The framework of logs and rods beneath kept the bed above the ground, and the boughs of the spruce fir, being full of resinous sap, gave out a slight fragrance. On this mattress a rug and some old great-coats were to be thrown, and they meant to cover themselves with more rugs and coats. The bedstead took up much of the room, but then it

would answer in the daytime instead of chairs to sit on.

"It's finished now, then," said Mark.

"Quite finished," said Bevis. "All we have now to do is to bring our things."

"And get wrecked," said Mark. "These chips and boughs," pointing to the heap they had cut from the poles and stakes, "will do for our fire. Come on. Let's go up and look at the cliff where we are to be dashed to pieces."

They climbed up the cliff to the young oak on the summit, and went to the edge. The firm sand bore them safely at the verge.

"It looks very deep," said Bevis. "The sand goes down straight."

"Fathomless," said Mark. "Just think how awful. It ought to happen at night—pitch black! I know! Some savages ought to light a fire up here and guide us to destruction."

"We could not scramble up this cliff out of the water—I mean if we have to swim."

"Of course we shall have to swim, clinging to oars."

"Then we must get round that corner, somehow."

"The other side is all weeds; that wouldn't do."

“Very likely the waves would bang us against the cliff. Don’t you remember how Ulysses clung to the rock?”

“His hands were torn.”

“Nearly drowned.”

“Tired out.”

“Thumped and breathless.”

“Jolly!”

“But I say! There’s one thing we’ve forgotten,” said Bevis. “If we smash our ship against a cliff like this she’ll go to the bottom—”

“Well, that’s just what we want.”

“Ah, but it’s not like rocks or shoals; she’ll go straight down, right under where we can’t get at her—”

“All the better.”

“But then our things will go down too—gun, and powder, and provisions, and everything.”

“Put them on the island first and wreck ourselves afterwards.”

“So we could. Yes, we could do that, but then,” said Bevis, imagining what would happen, “when the Pinta was missed from the harbour and did not come back, there would be a search, and they would think something had happened to us.”

“I see,” said Mark, “that’s very awkward.

What a trouble it is to get wrecked! Why can't people let us be jolly?"

"They must not come looking after us," said Bevis, "else it will spoil everything."

"Perhaps we had better put the wreck off," said Mark, in a dejected tone. "Do the island first, and have the wreck afterwards."

"It seems as if we must," said Bevis, "and then it's almost as awkward—"

"Why?"

"We shall have to come here in the *Pinta*, and yet we must not keep her here, else she will be missed."

"The ship must be here and at home too."

"Yes," said Bevis; "she must be at New Formosa on the equator and at home in the harbour. It's a very difficult thing."

"Awfully difficult," said Mark. "But you can do it. Try! Think! Shall I tickle you?"

"It wants magic," said Bevis. "I ought to have studied magic more; only there are no magic books now."

"But you can think, I know. Now, think hard—*hard*."

"First," said Bevis slowly, tracing out the proceedings in his imagination; "first we must bring

all our things—the gun and powder, and provisions, and great-coats, and the astrolabe, and spears, and leave them all here.”

“Pan ought to come,” said Mark, “to watch the hut.”

“So he did; he shall come, and besides, if we shoot a wild duck he can swim out and fetch it.”

“Now go on,” said Mark. “First, we bring everything and Pan.”

“Tie him up,” said Bevis, “and row home in the boat. Then the thing is, how are we to get to the island?”

“Swim,” said Mark.

“Too far.”

“But we needn’t swim all up the New Sea. Couldn’t we swim from where we landed that night after the battle?”

“Ever so much better. Let’s go and look,” said Bevis.

Away they went to the shore on that side of the island, but they saw in a moment that it was too far. It was two hundred yards to the sedges on the bank where they had landed that night. They could not trust themselves to swim more than fifty or sixty yards; there was, too, the risk of weeds, in which they might get entangled.

"I know!" said Bevis, "I know! You stop on the island with Pan. I'll sail the Pinta into harbour, then I'll paddle back on the catamaran."

"There!" said Mark, "I knew you could do it if you thought hard. We could bring the catamaran up in the boat, and leave it in the sedges there ready."

"I can leave half my clothes on the island," said Bevis, "and tie the rest on my back, and paddle here from the sedges in ten minutes. That will be just like the savages do."

"I shall come too," said Mark. "I shan't stop here. Let Pan be tied up, and I'll paddle as well."

"The catamaran won't bear two."

"Get another. There's lots of planks. I will come—it's much jollier paddling than sitting here and doing nothing."

"Capital," said Bevis. "We'll have two catamarans, and paddle here together."

"First-rate. Let's be quick and get the things on the island."

"There will be such a lot," said Bevis. "The matchlock, and the powder, and the flour, and—"

"Salt," said Mark. "Don't you remember the moorhen. Things are not nice without salt."

“Yes, salt and matches, and pots for cooking, and a lantern, and—”

“Ever so many cargoes,” said Mark. “As there’s such a lot, and as we can’t go home and fetch anything if it’s forgotten, hadn’t you better write a list?”

“So I will,” said Bevis. “The pots and kettles will be a bother, they will want to know what we are going to do.”

“Buy some new ones.”

“Right; and leave them at Macaroni’s.”

“Come on. Sail home and begin.”

They launched the *Pinta*, and the spanking south-easterly breeze carried them swiftly into harbour. At home there was a small parcel, very neatly done up, addressed to “Captain Bevis.”

“That’s Frances’s handwriting,” said Mark. Bevis cut the string and found a flag inside made from a broad red ribbon cut to a point.

“It’s a pennant,” said Bevis. “It will do capitally. How was it we never thought of a flag before?”

“We were so busy,” said Mark. “Girls have nothing to do, and so they can remember these sort of stitched things.”

“She shall have a bird of paradise for her hat,”

said Bevis. "We shall be sure to shoot one on the island."

"I shouldn't give it to her," said Mark. "I should sell it. Look at the money."

In the evening they took a large box (which locked) up to the boat, carrying it through the courtyard with the lid open—ostentatiously open—and left it on board. Next morning they filled it with their tools. Bevis kept his list and pencil by him, and as they put in one thing it suggested another, which he immediately wrote down. There were files, gimlets, hammers, screw-drivers, planes, chisels, the portable vice, six or seven different sorts of nails, every tool indeed they had. The hatchet and saw were already on the island. Besides these there were coils of wire and cord, balls of string, and several boxes of safety and lucifer matches. This was enough for one cargo, they shut the lid, and began to loosen the sails ready for hoisting.

"You might take us once."

"You never asked us."

Tall Val and little Charlie had come along the bank unnoticed while they were so busy.

"I wish you would go away," said Mark, beginning to push the *Pinta* afloat. The ballast and cargo made her drag on the sand.

“Bevis,” said Val, “let us have one sail.”

“All the times you’ve been sailing,” said Charlie, “and all by yourselves, and never asked anybody.”

“And after we banged you in the battle,” said Val. “If you did beat us, we hit you as hard as we could.”

“It was a capital battle,” said Bevis hesitatingly. He had the halyard in his hand, and paused with the mainsail half hoisted.

“Whopping and snopping,” said Charlie.

“Charging and whooping and holloaing,” said Val.

“Rare,” said Bevis. “Yes; you fought very well.”

“But you never asked us to have a sail.”

“Not once—you didn’t.”

“Well, it’s not your ship. It’s our ship,” said Mark, giving another push, till the Pinta was nearly afloat.

“Stop,” cried Charlie, running down to the water’s edge. “Bevis, do take us—”

“It’s very selfish of you,” said Val, following.

“So it is,” said Bevis. “I say, Mark—”

“Pooh!” said Mark, and with a violent shove he launched the boat, and leaped on board. He took a

scull, and began to row her head round. The wind was north and light.

"I hate you," said Charlie. "I believe you're doing something. What's in that box."

"Ballast, you donk," said Mark.

"That it isn't, I saw it just before you shut the lid. It's not ballast."

"Let's let them come," said Bevis irresolutely.

"You awful stupe," said Mark, under his breath. "They'll spoil everything."

"And why do you always sail one way?" said Val. "We've seen you ever so many times."

"I won't be watched," said Bevis angrily: he, unconsciously, endeavoured to excuse his selfishness under rage.

"You can't help it."

"I tell you, I won't."

"You're not General Cæsar now."

"I hate you," pulling up the mainsail. Mark took the rope and fastened it; Bevis sat down to the tiller.

"You're a beast," screamed little Charlie, as the sails drew and the boat began to move: the north wind was just aft.

"I never thought you were so selfish," shouted Val. "Go on—I won't ask you again."

“Take that,” said Charlie, “and that—and that.”

He threw three stones, one after the other, with all his might: the third, rising from the surface of the water, struck the Pinta's side sharply.

“Aren't they just horrid?” he said to Val.

“I never saw anything like it,” said Val. “But we'll pay them out, somehow.”

On the boat, Bevis looked back presently, and saw them still standing at the water's edge.

“It's a pity,” he said; “Mark, I don't like it: shall we have them?”

“How can we? Of course they would spoil everything; they would tell everybody, and we could never do it; and, besides, the new island would not be a new island, if everybody was there.”

“No more it would.”

“We can take them afterwards—after we've done the island. That will be just as well.”

“So it will. They will watch us, though.”

“It's very nasty of them to watch us,” said Mark. “Why should we take them for sails when they watch us?”

“I hate being watched,” said Bevis.

“They will just make everything as nasty for us

as they can," said Mark ; " and we shall have to be as cunning as ever we can be."

" We will do it, though, somehow."

" That we will."

The light north wind wafted the Pinta gently up the New Sea : the red pennant, fluttering at the mast, pointed out the course before them. They disposed of their first cargo in the store-room, or cave, placing the tools in a sack, though the cave was as dry as the box, that there might not be the least chance of their rusting. The return voyage was slow, for they had to work against the wind, and it was too light for speed. They looked for Charlie and Val, but both were gone.

Another cargo was ready late in the afternoon. They carried the things up in the flag-basket, and, before filling the box, took care to look round and behind the shed where the skulls were kept, lest any one should be spying. Hitherto they had worked freely, and without any doubt or suspicion : now they were constantly on the watch, and suspected every tree of concealing some one. Bevis chafed under this, and grew angry about it. In filling the box, too, they kept the lid towards the shore, and hoisted the mainsail to form a screen.

Mark took care that there should be some salt,

and several bags of flour, and two of biscuits, which they got from a whole tinful in the house. He remembered some pepper too, but overlooked the mustard. They took several tins of condensed milk. From a side of bacon, up in the attic, they cut three streaky pieces, and bought some sherry at the inn ; for they thought if they took one of the bottles in the house, it would be missed, and that the servants would be blamed. Some wine would be good to mix with the water ; for though they meant to take a wooden bottle of ale, they knew it would not keep.

Then there was a pound of tea, perhaps more ; for they took it from the chest, and shovelled it up like sand, both hands full at once. A bundle of old newspapers was tied up, to light the fire ; for they had found, by experience, that it was not easy to do so with only dry grass. Bevis hunted about till he discovered the tin mug he had when he was a little boy, and two tin plates. Mark brought another mug. A few knives and forks would never be missed from the basketful in the kitchen ; and, in choosing some spoons, they were careful not to take silver, because the silver was counted every evening.

They asked if they could have a small zinc bucket for the boat ; and when they got it, put

three pounds or more of knob sugar in it, loose ; and covered it over with their Turkish bathing-towels, in which they had wrapped up a brush and comb. Just as they were about to start, they remembered soap and candles. To get these things together, and up to the Pinta, took them some hours, for they often had to wait awhile till people were out of the way before they could get at the cupboards. In the afternoon, as they knew, some of the people went upstairs to dress, and that was their opportunity. By the time they had landed, and stowed away this cargo, the sun was declining.

CHAPTER XIII.

MORE CARGOES—ALL READY.

NEXT morning the third cargo went; they had to row, for the New Sea was calm. It consisted of arms. Bevis's favourite bow, of course, was taken, and two sheaves of arrows; Mark's spears and harpoon; the crossbow, throw-sticks, the boomerang and darts; so that the armoury was almost denuded.

Besides these there were fish-hooks (which were put in the box), fishing-rods, and kettles; an old horn-lantern, the old telescope, the astrolabe, scissors and thread (which shipwrecked people always have); a bag full of old coins, which were to be found in the sand on the shore, where a Spanish galleon had been wrecked (one of those the sunken galley had been convoying when the tornado overtook them); a small looking-glass, a piece of iron rod, six bottles of lemonade, a cribbage-board

and pack of cards, and a bezique pack ; a basket of apples, and a bag of potatoes. The afternoon cargo was clothes, for they thought they might want a change if it was wet ; so they each took one suit, carefully selecting old things that had been disused, and would not be missed.

Then there were the great-coats for the bed ; these were very awkward to get up to the boat, and caused many journeys, for they could only take one coat each at a time.

“What a lot of rubbish you are taking to your boat,” said mamma once. “Mind you don’t sink it : you will fill your boat with rubbish till you can’t move about.”

“Rubbish !” said Bevis indignantly. “Rubbish, indeed !”

They so often took the rugs that there was no need to conceal them. Mark hit on a good idea and rolled up the barrel of the matchlock in one of the rugs, and with it the ramrod. In the other they hid the stock and powder-horn, and so got them to the boat ; chuckling over Mark’s device, by which they removed the matchlock in broad daylight.

“If Val’s watching,” said Bevis, as they came up the bank with the rugs, the last part of the load, “he’ll have to be smashed.”

“People who spy about ought to be killed,” said Mark. “Everything ought to be done openly,” carefully depositing the concealed barrel in the stern-sheets. This was the most important thing of all. When they had got the matchlock safe in the cave, they felt that the greatest difficulty was surmounted.

John Young had brought their anvil, the 28 lb. weight, for them to the bank, and it was shipped. He bought a small pot for boiling, the smallest size made, for them in Latten, also a saucepan, a tin kettle, and teapot. One of the wooden bottles, like tiny barrels, used to send ale out to the men in the fields, was filled with strong ale. Mark drew it in the cellar which had once been his prison, carefully filling it to the utmost, and this John got away for them rolled up in his jacket. The all-potent wand of the enchanter Barleycorn was held over him; what was there he would not have done for them?

He was all the more ready to oblige them because since Mark’s imprisonment in the cellar, Bevis and Mark had rather taken his part against the Bailiff, and got him out of scrapes. Feeling that he had powerful friends at court, John did not trouble to work so hard. They called at the cottage for the pot and the other things, which were in a sack ready

for them. Loo fetched the sack, and Bevis threw it over his shoulder.

"I scoured them well," said Loo. "They be all clean."

"Did you?" said Bevis. "Here," searching his pocket. "O! I've only a fourpenny piece left." He gave it to her.

"I can cook," said Loo wistfully, "and make tea." This was a hint to them to take her with them; but away they strode unheeding. The tin kettle and teapot clashed in the sack.

"I believe I saw Val behind that tree," said Bevis.

"He can't see through a sack though," said Mark.

The wind was still very light, and all the morning was occupied in delivering this cargo. The cave or store-room was now crammed full, and they could not put any more without shelves.

"That's the last," said Mark, dragging the heavy anvil in. "Except Pan."

"And my books," said Bevis, "and ink and paper. We must keep a journal of course."

"So we must," said Mark. "I forgot that. It will make a book."

"'Adventures in New Formosa,'" said Bevis.

“We’ll write it every evening after we’ve done work, don’t you see.”

When they got home he put his books together—the *Odyssey*, *Don Quixote*, the grey and battered volume of ballads, a tiny little book of Shakespeare’s poems, of which he had lately become very fond, and Filmore’s rhymed translation of *Faust*. He found two manuscript books for the journal; these and the pens and ink-bottle could all go together in the final cargo with Pan.

All the while these voyages were proceeding they had been thinking over how they should get away from home without being searched for, and had concluded that almost the only excuse they could make would be that they were going to spend a week or two with Jack. This they now began to spread about, and pretended to prepare for the visit. As they expected, it caused no comment. All that was said was that they were not to stop too long. Mamma did not much like the idea of being left by herself, but then it was quite different to their being away in disgrace.

But she insisted upon Bevis writing home. Bevis shrugged his shoulders, foreseeing that it would be difficult to do this as there was no post-office on New Formosa; but it was of no use, she

said he should not go unless he promised to write.

“Very well,” said Bevis. “Letters are the stupidest stupidity stupes ever invented.”

But now there arose a new difficulty, which seemed as if it could not be got over. How were they to tell while they were away on the island, and cut off from all communication with the mainland, what was going on at home; whether it was all right and they were supposed to be at Jack’s, or whether they were missed? For though so intent on deceiving the home authorities, and so ingenious in devising the means, they stopped at this.

They did not like to think that perhaps Bevis’s governor and mamma, who were so kind, would be miserable with anxiety on finding that they had disappeared. Mark, too, was anxious about his Jolly Old Moke. With the usual contradiction of the mind they earnestly set about to deceive their friends, and were equally anxious not to give them any pain. After all their trouble, it really seemed as if this would prevent the realization of their plans. A whole day they walked about and wondered what they could do, and got quite angry with each other from simple irritation.

At last they settled that they must arrange with

some one so as to know, for if there was any trouble about them they meant to return immediately. Both agreed that little Charlie was the best they could choose ; he was as quick as lightning, and as true as steel.

“Just remember,” said Bevis, “how he fetched up Cecil in the battle.”

“That just made all the difference,” said Mark. “Now I’ll manage it with him ; don’t you come, you leave him to me ; you’re so soft—”

“Soft !—Well, I like that.”

“No ; I don’t mean stupid—so easy. There, don’t look like that. You tell me—you think what Charlie must do—and I’ll manage him.”

Bevis thought and considered that Charlie must give them a signal—wave a handkerchief. Charlie must stand on some conspicuous place visible from New Formosa ; by the quarry would be the very place, at a certain fixed time every day, and wave a white handkerchief, and they could look through the telescope and see him. If anything was wrong, he could take his hat off and wave that instead. Mark thought it would do very well, and set out to find and arrange with Charlie.

Being very much offended because he had not been taken for a sail, Charlie was at first very

off-hand, and not at all disposed to do anything. But when shrewd Mark let out as a great secret that he and Bevis were going to live in the wood at the end of the New Sea for a while like savages, Charlie began to relent, for all his sympathies went with the idea.

Mark promised him faithfully that when he and Bevis had done it first, he should come too if he would help them. Charlie gave in and agreed, but on condition that he should be taken for a sail first. Eager as Mark was for the island, it was no good trying to persuade Charlie, he adhered to his stipulation, and Mark had to yield. However, he reflected that if they took Charlie for a sail he would be certain to do as he promised, and besides that it would make Val jealous, and he and Charlie would quarrel, and so they would not be always watching.

So it was settled—Charlie to have a sail, and then every afternoon at four o'clock he was to stand just above the quarry and wave a white handkerchief if all was right. If Bevis and Mark were missed he was to take off his hat, and wave that. As he had no watch, Charlie was to judge the time by the calling of the cows to be milked—the milkers make a great hullabaloo and shouting, which can be heard a long distance off.

“I said we were going to live in the wood,” Mark told Bevis when he came back. “Then he won’t think we’re on the island. If he plays us any trick he’ll go and try and find us in the wood.”

While Mark was gone about the signal, Bevis, thinking everything over, remembered the letter he had promised to write home. To post the letter one or other of them must go on the mainland, if by day some one would very likely see them and mention it, and then the question would arise why they came near without going home? Bevis went up to the cottage, and told Loo to listen every evening at ten o’clock out of her window, which looked over the field at the back, and if she heard anybody whistle three notes, “Foo-tootle-too,” to slip out, as it would be them.

“That I will,” said Loo, delighted. “I’ll come in a minute.”

Charlie had his sail next morning, but they took care not to go near the island. Knowing how sharp his eyes were, they tacked to and fro in Mozambique and Fir-Tree Gulf. Charlie learned to manage the foresail in five minutes, then the tiller, and to please him the more they let him act as captain for a while. He promised most faithfully

to make the signal every day, and they knew he would do it.

In the afternoon they thought and thought to see if there was anything they had forgotten, and to try and call things to mind, wandered all over the house, but only recollected one thing—the gridiron. There were several in the kitchen. They took an old one, much burnt, which was not used. With this and Bevis's books they visited New Formosa, rowing up towards evening, and upon their return unshipped the mast, and took it and the sails home, else perhaps Val or some one would launch the Pinta and try to sail in their absence. They meant to padlock the boat with a chain, but if the sails were in her it would be a temptation to break the lock. There was now nothing to take but Pan, and they were so eager for the morning that it was past midnight before they could go to sleep.

The morning of the 3rd of August—the very day Columbus sailed—the long desired day, was beautifully fine, calm, and cloudless. They were in such haste to start they could hardly say “Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” said Polly the dairymaid.

“Don't want to see you,” said Bevis. Polly was not yet forgiven for the part she had taken in hustling Mark into the cellar. They had got out

into the meadow with Pan, when Bevis's mother came running after.

"Have you any money?" she asked, with her purse in her hand.

They laughed, for the thought instantly struck them that they could not spend money on New Formosa, but they did not say they did not want any. She gave them five shillings each, and kissed them again. She watched them till they went through the gateway with Pan, and were hidden from sight.

Pan leaped on board after them, and they rowed to the island. It was so still, the surface was like glass. The spaniel ran about inside the stockade, and sniffed knowingly at the coats on the bedstead, but he did not wag his tail or look so happy when Bevis suddenly drew his collar three holes tighter and buckled it. Bevis knew very well if his collar was not as tight as possible Pan would work his head out. They fastened him securely to the post at the gateway in the palisade, and hastened away.

When Pan realized that they were really gone, and heard the sound of the oars, he went quite frantic. He tugged, he whined, he choked, he rolled over, he scratched, and bit, and shook, and whimpered; the tears ran down his eyes, his ears were pulled over his head by the collar, against which he strained.

But he strained in vain. They heard his dismal howls almost down to the Mozambique.

“Poor Pan!” said Bevis. “He shall have a feast the first thing we shoot.”

They had left their stockings on the island, and everything else they could take off so as not to have very large bundles on their backs while paddling, and took their pocket-knives out of their trouser’s pockets and left them, knowing things are apt to drop out of the pockets. The *Pinta* was drawn up as far as she would come on the shore at the harbour, and then fastened with a chain, which they had ready, to a staple and padlocked. Mark had thought of this, so that no one could go rowing round, and he had a piece of string on the key with which he fastened it to a button-hole of his waistcoat that it might not be lost.

This done, they got through the hedge, and retraced the way they had come home on the night of the battle, through the meadows, the corn-fields, and lastly across the wild waste pasture or common. From there they scrambled through the hedges and the immense bramble thickets, and regained the shore opposite their island.

They went down the marshy level to the bank, and along it to the beds of sedges, where, on the

verge of the sea, they had hidden the catamarans. There they undressed, and made their clothes and boots into bundles, and slung them over their shoulders with cord. Then they hauled their catamarans down to the water.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEW FORMOSA.

SPLASH !

“Is it deep ? ”

“Not yet.”

Bevis had got his catamaran in and ran out with it some way, as the water was shallow, till it deepened, when he sat astride and paddled.

“Come on,” he shouted.

Splash !

“I’m coming.”

Mark ran in with his in the same manner, and sitting astride paddled about ten yards behind.

“Weeds,” said Bevis, feeling the long rough stalks like string dragging against his feet.

“Where ? I can’t see.”

“Under water. They will not hurt.”

“There goes a flapper” (a young wild duck).

“I hope we shan’t see the magic wave.”

“Pooh!”

“My bundle is slipping.”

“Pull it up again.”

“It’s all right now.”

“Holloa! Land,” said Bevis, suddenly standing up.

He had reached a shallow where the water was no deeper than his knees.

“A jack struck. There,” said Mark, as he too stood up, and drew his catamaran along with his hand.

Splash!

Bevis was off again, paddling in deeper water. Mark was now close behind.

“There’s a coot; he’s gone into the sedges.”

“Parrots,” said Mark, as two wood-pigeons passed over.

“Which is the right channel?” said Bevis, pausing.

They had now reached the great mass of weeds which came to the surface, and through which it was impossible to move. There were two channels, one appeared to lead straight to the island, the other wound about to the right.

“Which did we come down in the Pinta, when we hid the catamarans?” said Mark.

“Stupe, that’s just what I want to know.”

“Go straight on,” said Mark; “that looks clearest.”

So it did, and Bevis went straight on; but when they had paddled fifty yards they both saw at once that they could not go much farther that way, for the channel curved sharply, and was blocked with weeds.

“We must go back,” said Mark.

“We can’t turn round.”

“We can’t paddle backwards. There I’m in the weeds.”

“Turn round on the plank.”

“Perhaps I shall fall off.”

“Sit sideways first.”

“The plank tips.”

“Very well, I’ll do it first,” said Bevis.

He turned sideways to try and get astride, looking the other way. The plank immediately tipped and pitched him into the water, bundle and all.

“Ah!” said Mark. “Thought you could do it so easy; didn’t you?”

Bevis threw his right arm over the plank, and tried to get on it; but every time he attempted to lift his knee over, the catamaran gave way under

him. His paddle floated away. The bundle of clothes on his back, soaked and heavy, kept him down.

Mark paddled towards him, and tried to lift him with one hand, but nearly upset himself. Bevis struggled hard to get on, and so pushed the plank sideways to the edge of the weeds. He felt the rough strings again winding round his feet.

“You’ll be in the weeds,” said Mark, growing alarmed. “Come on my plank. Try. I’ll throw my bundle off.” He began to take it from his back. “Then it will just keep you up. O!”

Bevis put his hands up, and immediately sank under the surface, but he had done it purposely, to free himself from his bundle. The bundle floated, and the cord slipped over his head. Bringing his hands down Bevis as instantly rose to the surface, bumping his head against the catamaran.

“Now I can do it,” he said, blowing the water from his nostrils.

He seized the plank, and laid almost all along in the water, so as to press very lightly on it, his weight being supported by the water, then he got his knee over and sat up.

“Hurrah!”

The bundle was slowly settling down when Mark seized it.

“Never mind about the things being wet,” he said. “Sit still ; I’ll fetch your paddle.”

Dragging the bundle in the water by the cord, Mark went after, and recovered Bevis’s paddle. To come back he had to back water, and found it very awkward even for so short a distance. The catamaran would not go straight.

“O ! what a stupe I was,” said Bevis. “I’ve got on the same way again.”

In his hurry he had forgotten his object, and got astride facing the island as before.

“Well, I never,” said Mark. “Stop—don’t.”

Bevis slipped off his catamaran again, but this time not being encumbered with the bundle he was up on it again in half a minute, and faced the mainland.

“There,” said he. “Now you can come close. That’s it. Now give me your bundle.”

Mark did so. Afterwards Bevis took the cord of his own bundle, which being in the water was not at all heavy. “Now you can turn.”

Mark slipped off, but managed so that his chest was still on the plank. In that position he worked himself round and got astride the other way.

“Done very well,” said Bevis ; “ever so much better than I did. Here.”

Mark slung his bundle, and they paddled back to the shallow water, Bevis towing his soaked dress. They stood up in the shallow and rested a few minutes, and Bevis fastened his bundle to his plank just in front of where he sat.

"Come on." Off he went again, following the other channel this time. It wound round a bank grown with sedges, and then led straight into a broader and open channel, the same they had come down in the boat. They recognized it directly, and paddled faster.

"Hark! there's Pan," said Mark.

As they came near the island, Pan either scented them or heard a splashing, for he set up his bark again. He had choked himself silent before.

"Pan! Pan!" shouted Bevis, whistling.

Yow—wow—wow!

"Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!"

They ran up on the shore of New Formosa, and began to dance and caper, kicking up their heels.

Yow-wow—wow-wow!

"Pan! I'm coming," said Bevis, and began to run, but stopped suddenly.

Thistles in the grass and trailing briars stayed him. He put on his wet boots, and then picking

his way round, reached the hut. He let Pan loose. The spaniel crouched at his feet and whimpered, and followed him, crawling on the ground. Bevis patted him, but he could not leap up as usual, the desertion had quite broken his spirit for the time. Bevis went into the hut, and just as he was, with nothing on but his boots, took his journal and wrote down "Wednesday."

"There," said he to Mark, who had now come, more slowly, for he carried the two bundles, "there, I've put down the day, else we shall lose our reckoning, don't you see."

They were soon dressed. Bevis put on the change he had provided in the store-room, and spread his wet clothes out to dry in the sun. Pan crept from one to the other; he could not get enough patting, he wanted to be continually spoken to and stroked. He would not go a yard from them.

"What's the time?" said Bevis, "my watch has stopped." The water had stopped it.

"Five minutes to twelve," said Mark. "You must write down, 'We landed on the island at noon.'"

"So I will to-night. My watch won't go; the water is in it."

"Lucky mine did not get wet too."

“Hang yours up in the hut, else perhaps it will get stopped somehow, then we shan’t know the time.”

Mark hung his watch up in the hut, and caught sight of the wooden bottle.

“The first thing people do is to refresh themselves,” he said. “Let’s have a glass of ale: splendid thing when you’re shipwrecked—”

“A libation to the gods,” said Bevis. “That’s the thing; you pour it out on the ground because you’ve escaped.”

“O!” said Mark, opening the bottle. “Now just look! And I filled it to the brim so that I could hardly get the cork in.”

“John,” said Bevis.

“The rascal.”

“Ships’ provisions are always scamped,” said Bevis; “somebody steals half, and puts in rotten biscuits. It’s quite proper. Why, there’s a quart gone.”

John Young, carrying the heavy bottle, could not resist just taking out the cork to see how full it was. And his mouth was very large.

“Here’s a mug,” said Mark, who had turned over a heap of things and found a tin cup. They each had a cupful.

"Matchlock," said Bevis.

"Matchlock," said Mark. For while they drank both had had their eyes on their gun-barrel.

"Pliers," said Bevis, taking it up. "Here's the wire; I want the pliers."

It was not so easy to find the pliers under such a heap of things.

"Store-room's in a muddle," said Mark.

"Put it right," said the captain.

"I've got it."

Bevis put the barrel in the stock, and began twisting the copper wire round to fasten it on. Mark searched for the powder-horn and shot-bag. Three strands were twisted neatly and firmly round the barrel and stock—one near the breech, one half way up, the third near the muzzle. It was then secure.

"It looks like a real gun now," said Mark.

"Put your finger on the touch-hole," said Bevis. Mark did so, while he blew through the barrel.

"I can feel the air," said Mark; "the barrel is clear. Shall I measure the powder?"

"Yes.

Bevis shut the pan, Mark poured out the charge from the horn and inserted a wad of paper, which Bevis rammed home with the brass ramrod.

Bow-wow—bow-yow !

Up jumped Pan, leaped on them, tore round the hut, stood at the doorway and barked, ran a little way out, and came back again to the door, where, with his head over his shoulder, as if beckoning to them to follow, he barked his loudest.

“It’s the gun,” said Mark. Pan forgot his trouble at the sound of the ramrod.

Next the shot was put in, and then the priming at the pan. A piece of match or cord prepared to burn slowly, about a foot and a half long, was wound round the handle of the stock, and the end brought forward through the spiral of the hammer. Mark struck a match and lit it.

“What shall we shoot at?” said Bevis, as they went out at the door. Pan rushed before and disappeared in the bramble bushes, startling a pair of turtle-doves from a hawthorn.

“Parrakeets,” said Mark. “They’re smaller than parrots ; you can’t shoot flying with a matchlock. There’s a beech ; shoot at that.”

The sunshine fell on one side of the trunk of a beech, lighting up the smooth bark. They walked up till they thought they were near enough, and planted the staff or rest in the ground. Bevis put the matchlock on it, pushed the lid of the pan open

with his thumb, and aimed at the tree. He pulled the trigger; the match descended on the powder in the pan, which went puff! The report followed directly.

"Never kicked a bit," said Bevis, as the sulphury smoke rose; the barrel was too heavy to kick.

"Hit!" shouted Mark, who had run to the tree. "Forty dozen shots everywhere."

Bevis came with the gun, and saw the bark dotted all over with shot. He measured the distance back to the rest left standing in the ground, by pacing steadily.

"Thirty-two yards."

"My turn," said Mark.

The explosion had extinguished the match, so shutting the pan-lid they loaded the gun again. Before Mark shot, Bevis went to the tree, and fastened a small piece of paper to the bark with a pin. Mark fired and put three shots through the paper. Pan raced and circled round to find the game, and returned with his back covered with cleavers which stuck to his coat. After shooting three times each they thought they would try bullets, but with ball they could do nothing. Four times they each fired at the beech and missed it, though every time they took a more careful aim.

“The staff’s too high,” said Mark, “I’m sure that’s it. We ought to kneel, then it would be steadier.”

Bevis cut the staff shorter, not without some difficulty, for the old black oak was hard like iron. The next was Mark’s turn. He knelt on one knee, aimed deliberately, and the ball scored the trunk, making a groove along the bark. Bevis tried but missed, so did Mark next time; then again Bevis fired, and missed.

“That’s enough,” said Bevis; “I shan’t have any more shooting with bullets.”

“But I hit it once.”

“But you didn’t hit it twice.”

“You never hit it once.”

“It wants a top-sight,” said Bevis, not very well pleased. “Nobody can shoot ball without a sight.”

“You can’t put one,” said Mark.

“I don’t know.” The sight was the only defect of the weapon; how to fasten that on they did not know.

“I hit it without a sight,” said Mark.

“Chance.”

“That it wasn’t.”

“It’s time to have dinner, I’m sure,” said Bevis. “The gun is to be put away now. I’ll take it in; you get some sticks for the fire.”

“O! very well,” said Mark shortly. “But there’s plenty of sticks inside the stockade!”

He followed Bevis and began to make a pile in their enclosed courtyard. Bevis having left the gun in the hut came out and helped him silently.

“It’s very hot here.”

“Awful!”

“Tropics.”

“The sun’s overhead.”

“Sun-stroke.”

“The fire ought to be made in the shadow.”

“There’s no shadow here.”

“Let us go into the wood then.”

“Very well—under the beech.”

They went out, and collected a heap of sticks in the shade of the beech at which they had been shooting. Mark lit the fire; Bevis sat down by the beech and watched the flame rise.

“Pot,” he said.

“Pot—what?” said Mark, still sulky.

“Fetch the water.”

“What?”

“Fetch the water.”

“O! I’m not Polly.”

“But I’m captain.”

“Hum!”

However, Mark fetched the pot, filled it at the shore, and presently came back with it, and put it on. Then he sat down too in the shade.

"You've not finished," said Bevis.

"What else?"

"What else; why the bacon."

"Get it yourself."

"Aren't you going?"

"No."

Bevis went to the hut, cut off a slice of bacon, and put it on.

Mark went to the hut, fetched a handful of biscuits and two apples, and began to eat them.

"You never brought me any," said Bevis.

"You never ordered me, captain."

"Why can't you be agreeable?"

"Why can't you ask anybody, and do something yourself, too?"

"Don't be a stupe," said Bevis, "so I will. But get me a biscuit, now do." At this Mark fetched the bag for him.

"We shall have to wait a long time for our dinner," he said. "They're just having a jolly one at home."

"While they're at home and comfortable we're on an island seven thousand miles from anywhere."

“ Savages all round.”

“ Magic things.”

“ If they only knew, wouldn't they be in a state.”

“ Ships fitted out to find us. But they would not know which way to sail.”

“ No charts.”

“ Nothing.”

“ Never find us. I say, get a fork and try the bacon.”

“ Don't look done.”

“ Put some more sticks on. I say; we forgot the potatoes.”

“ O ! bother. It's hot; don't let's have any. Let's sit still.”

“ Right.”

Pan looked from one to the other, ran round and came back, went into the underwood and came out again, but finding that it was of no use, and that the gun was really put aside, he presently settled down like them in the shade, and far enough from the fire not to feel any heat from it.

“ Oaks are banyans, aren't they ? ” said Mark.
“ They used to be, you know,” remembering the exploration of the wood.

“ Banyans,” said Bevis.

“ What are beeches ? ”

“O! teak.”

“That’s China; aren’t we far from China?”

“Ask me presently when I’ve got the astrolabe.”

“What are elms? Stop, now I remember; there are no elms!”

“How do you know?”

“Didn’t I go round the island one day? Besides, you could see them if there were, from the cliff.”

“So we could; there are no elms. That shows how different this country is from any other country ever found.”

“Poplars?” said Mark in an interrogative tone.

“Palms, of course. You can see them miles away like palms in a desert.”

“Pictures,” said Mark. “Yes, that’s it. You always see the sun going down, camels with long shadows, and palm-trees. Then I suppose it’s Africa?”

“You must wait till we have taken an observation. We shall see too by the stars.”

“Firs?” said Mark. “They’re cedars, of course.”

“Of course. Willows are blue gums.”

“Then it’s near Australia. I expect it is; because, don’t you know, there were no animals in Australia except kangaroos, and there are none here at all. So it’s that sort of country.”

“But there are tigers in the reeds.”

“Ah, I forgot them.”

“Huge boa-constrictors. One of them would reach from here to Serendib. Did you hear that rustling? Most likely that was one.”

“Do elephants swim? They might come off here.”

“Hippopotami.”

“A black rhinoceros; they’re rogues.”

“Hyenas.”

“Giraffes. They can nibble half way up the palm-trees.”

“Pumas.”

“Panthers.”

“’Possums.”

“Yaks.”

“Grizzlies.”

“Scorpions.”

“Heaps of things on your bed and crawling on the ceiling.”

“Jolly!”

“Fork up the bacon.”

Mark forked it up.”

“It looks queer,” he said, dropping it in again.

“Ought the pot to be on the ashes?”

“There’s an iron rod for the kettle to swing on,”

said Bevis. "It's somewhere in the store-room. Is it eight bells yet?"

"I expect so," said Mark. "Rations are late. A mutton chop now, or a fowl—"

"Don't grow here," said Bevis. "You cut steaks from buffaloes while they're alive, or fry elephants, or boil turkeys. There are no fowls."

"It seems to me," said Mark, "that we ought to have the gun here. Suppose some savages were to land from canoes and get between us and the hut? It's twenty yards to the stockade; more I should think."

"I never thought of that," said Bevis. "There may be fifty canoes full of them in the reeds, and proas flying here almost. Fetch the gun—quick."

Mark ran and brought it.

"Load with ball," said Bevis.

The ball was rammed home. Pan set up a joyous bark.

"Kick him," said Bevis, languidly raising himself on one arm. He had been lying on his back. "He'll bring the savages, or the crocodiles."

Pan was kicked, and crouched.

Mark leaned the gun against the teak-tree, and sat down again.

"Awfully hot," he said.

"Always is in the tropics."

"Ought to have an awning," said Mark; "and hammocks."

"So we did," said Bevis, sitting up. "How stupid to forget the hammocks. Did you ever see anything like it?"

"We can make an awning," said Mark. "Hang up one of the rugs by the four corners."

"Capital. Come on."

They fastened four pieces of cord to the corners of the rug, but found that the trees did not grow close enough together, so they had to set up two poles near the teak, and tie the cords at one end of the rug to these. The others were tied to a branch of the teak. By the time this was done they had worked themselves hot again putting up the awning to get cool. There was not a breath of wind, and it was very warm even in the double shadow of the teak and the awning.

"Bacon must be done," said Bevis.

"Must," said Mark.

They could not rest more than a quarter of an hour. They forked it out, and Mark held it on the fork, while Bevis ran to the hut for a piece of board to put it on, as they had forgotten dishes. Setting

the bacon on the board, they put it on the ground under the awning (Pan wanted to sniff at it), and tried a slice. It was not exactly nice, nor disagreeable, considering that they had forgotten to scrape it, or take the rind off. But biscuits were not so good as bread.

"We must make some dampers," said Mark; "you know, flour cakes: we can't bake, we haven't got an oven."

"Dampers are proper," said Bevis. "That's gold-mining. Very likely there are heaps of nuggets here somewhere—"

"Placers."

"And gold-dust in the river."

"No mustard. And I recollected the salt!" said Mark. "I say; is this bacon quite nice?"

"Well, no; not quite."

"I don't like it."

"No, I don't."

"Wish we could have brought some meat."

"Can't keep meat under the tropics."

"Shall we chuck it to Pan?"

"No, not all. Here, give him a slice. Pooh! He sniffs at it. Just see! He's pampered; he won't eat it. Here, take the board, Mark, and put it in the store-room."

Mark took the board with the bacon on it, and went to the hut. He came back with a mug full of ale, saying they had better drink it before it got quite stale.

“We must shoot something,” said Bevis. “We can’t eat much of that stuff.”

“Let’s go round the island,” said Mark, “and see if there’s anything about. Parrots, perhaps.”

“Pigeon-pie,” said Bevis.

“Parrot-pie; just the thing.”

“Hammer Pan, or he’ll run on first and spoil everything.”

CHAPTER XV.

NEW FORMOSA—FIRST DAY.

BEVIS lit the match, and they went quietly into the wood. Pan had to be hammered now and then to restrain him from rushing into the brambles. They knew the way now very well, having often walked round while building the hut looking for poles, and had trampled out a rough path winding about the thorns. The shooting at the teak-tree and the noise of Pan's barking had alarmed all the parrots; and though they looked out over the water in several places, no wild-fowl were to be seen.

As they came round under the group of cedars to the other side of the island Mark remembered the great jack or pike which he had seen there, almost as big as a shark. They went very softly, and peering round a blue gum bush, saw the jack basking in the sun, but a good way from shore, just at the edge of some weeds. The sunshine illumined

the still water, and they could see him perfectly, his long cruel jaws, his greenish back and white belly, and powerful tail.

Drawing back behind the blue gum, Bevis prepared the matchlock, blew the match so that the fire might be ready on it, opened the pan, and pushed the priming up to the touch-hole, from which it had been shaken as he walked, and then advanced the staff or rest to the edge of the bush. He put the heavy barrel on it, and knelt down. The muzzle of the long matchlock protruded through the leafy boughs.

"Ball cartridge," whispered Mark, holding Pan by the collar. "Steady."

"All right."

Bevis aimed up the barrel, the strands of wire rather interfered with his aim, and the glance passed from one of these to the other, rather than along the level of the barrel. The last strand hid the end of the barrel altogether. It wanted a sight. He looked along, and got the gun straight for the fish, aiming at the broadest part of the side ; then he remembered that a fish is really lower in the water than it appears, and depressed the muzzle till it pointed beneath the under-line of the jack.

Double-barrel guns with their hammers which

fall in the fiftieth of a second, driven by a strong spring directly the finger touches the trigger, translate the will into instant action. The gunner snatches the second when his gun is absolutely straight, and the shot flies to its destination before the barrel can deviate the thirty-second part of an inch. When Bevis's finger first pressed the trigger of the matchlock he had the barrel of his gun accurately pointed. But while he pulled the match down to the pan an appreciable moment of time intervened; and his mind too—so swift is its operation—left the fish, his mark and object, and became expectant of the explosion. The match touched the priming. Puff!

So infinitely rapid is the mind, so far does it outstrip gunpowder, that the flash from the pan and its tiny smoke seemed to Bevis to occur quite a little time before the great discharge, and in that little time his mind left the barrel, and came to look at the tiny puff of smoke.

Bang! the ball rushed forth, but not now in the course it would have taken had a hair-trigger and a spring instantly translated his original will into action. In these momentary divisions of time which had elapsed since he settled his aim, the long barrel, resting on the staff and moving easily

on its pivot, had imperceptibly drooped a trifle at the breech and risen as much at the muzzle.

The ball flew high, hit the water six inches beyond the fish, and fired at so low an angle ricocheted, and went skipping along the surface, cutting out pieces of weed till the friction dragged it under, and it sank. The fish swished his tail like a scull at the stern of a boat or the screw of a steamer, but swift as was his spring forward, he would not have escaped had not the ball gone high. He left an undulation on the surface as he dived unhurt.

Bevis stamped his foot to think he had missed again.

"It was the water," said Mark. "The bullet went duck and drake; I saw it."

He was too just to recall the fact of his having hit the teak-tree, the tree was so much larger than the fish. As he did not recall his success at the tree, Bevis's irritation went no farther.

"We must have a top-sight," he said.

"We won't use bullets again till we have a sight."

"No, we won't. But I'm sure I had the gun straight."

"So we had the rifle straight, but it did not hit."

“No, no more did it. There’s something peculiar in bullets—we will find out. I wanted that jack for supper.”

As they had not brought the powder-horn with them, they walked back to the hut.

“It’s not the gun’s fault, I’m sure,” said Mark. “It shoots beautiful; it’s my turn next.”

“Yes; you shall shoot. O! no, it’s not the gun. They can shoot sparrows in India with a single ball,” said Bevis; “and matchlocks kill tigers better than rifles. Matchlocks are splendid things.”

“Splendid things,” said Mark, stroking the stock of the gun, which he now carried on his shoulder, as if it had been a breathing pet that could appreciate his affection.

“This is a curious groove,” said Bevis, looking at the score in the bark of the teak where Mark’s bullet had struck it. “Look, it goes a little round; the bullet stuck to the tree and went a little way round, instead of just coming straight, so.”

“So it did,” said Mark. “It curved round the tree.”

“My arrow would have glanced off just the other way,” said Bevis, “if it had hit here.”

“The ball goes one way and the arrow the other.”

“One sticks to the tree as long as it can and the other shoots aside directly.”

Bullets have been known in like manner to strike a man's head in the front part and score a track half round it, and even then not do much injury.

“We ought to keep the gun loaded,” said Mark, as they reached the hut.

“Yes ; but it ought to be slung up, and not put anywhere where it might be knocked over.”

“Let's make some slings for it.”

After loading the gun this time with a charge of shot, and ramming it home with the brass ramrod—Mark enjoyed using the ramrod too much to hurry over it—they set to work and drove two stout nails into the uprights on the opposite side to the bed. To one of these nails a loop of cord was fastened ; to the other a similar piece was tied at one end, the other had a lesser loop, so as to take on or off the nail. When off it hung down, when on it made a loop like the other. The barrel of the gun was put through the first loop, and the stock then held up while the other piece of cord was hitched to its nail, when the long gun hung suspended.

“It looks like a hunter's hut now,” said Bevis, contemplating the matchlock. “I'll put my bow in

the corner.” He leaned his bow in the corner, and put a sheaf of arrows by it.

“My spear will go here,” said Mark.

“No,” said Bevis. “Put the spear by the bed-head.”

“Ready for use in the night?”

“Yes; put a knob-stick too. That’s it. Now look.”

“Doesn’t it look nice?”

“Just doesn’t it!”

“Real hunting.”

“Real as real.”

“If Val, and Cecil, and Ted could see!”

“And Charlie.”

“They would go wild.”

“The store-room *is* a muddle.”

“Shall we put it straight?”

“And get things ship-shape?”

“Yes.”

They began to assort the heaped-up mass of things in the cave, putting tools on one side, provisions on the other, and odd things in the centre. After awhile Mark looked up at his watch.

“Why, it’s past five! Tea time at home.”

“I don’t know,” said Bevis. “I expect the time’s different—it’s longitude.”

“ We are hours later, then ? ”

“ While it’s tea-time here, it’s breakfast there.”

“ When we go to bed, they get up. Here’s the astrolabe. Take the observation.”

“ So I will.”

The sun was lower now, just over the tops of the trees. Bevis hung the circle to the gate-post of the stockade and moved the tube till he could see the sun through it. It read 20° on the graduated disc.

“ Twenty degrees north latitude,” he said. “ It’s not on the equator.”

“ But it’s in the tropics.”

“ O, yes!—it’s in Cancer, right enough. It’s better than the Equator : they are obliged to lie still there all day long ; and it’s all swamps and steaming moisture and fevers and malaria.”

“ Much nicer here.”

“ O ! Much nicer.”

“ How lucky ! This island is put just right.”

“ The very spot ! ”

“ There ought to be a ditch outside the palisade,” said Mark. “ Like they have outside tents to run the water away when it rains. I’ve seen them round tents.”

“ So there ought. We’ll dig it.”

They fetched the spades and shovelled away half

an hour, but it was very warm, and they sat down presently inside the fence, which began to cast a shadow.

“We ought to have some blacks to do this sort of work,” said Mark.

“White people can’t slave in the tropics,” said Bevis. “Let’s do nothing now for a while.”

“Lemonade,” said Mark. Bevis nodded ; and Mark fetched and opened a bottle, then another.

“There are only four left,” he said.

“A ship ought to come every year with these kind of things,” said Bevis.

“It ought to be wrecked, and then we could get the best things from the wreck. Shall we do some more shooting?”

“Practising. We ought to practise with ball ; but we said we would not till we had a sight.”

“But it’s loaded with shot, and it’s my turn ; and there’s nothing for supper, or dinner to-morrow.”

“No more there is. One thing, though, if we practise shooting, we shall frighten all the birds away.”

“Ducks,” said Mark, “flappers and coots, and moorhens, they’re all about in the evening. The sun’s going down : let’s shoot one.”

“Very well.”

Mark got down the matchlock, and lit the match. He went first, and Bevis followed, two or three yards behind, with Pan. They walked as quietly as possible along the path they had made round the island, glancing out over the water at intervals. As they approached the other end of the island, where the ground was low and thick with reed-grass and sedges, they moved still more gently. They saw two young ducks, but they were too far; and whether they heard or suspected something swam in among a bed of rushes on a shoal. Mark stooped, and went down to the water's edge. Bevis stooped and followed, and there they set up the gun on the rest, hidden behind the fringe of sedges and reed-grass they had left when cutting them for the roof.

The muzzle almost, but not quite, protruded through the sedges, and they sat down to wait on some of the dry grasses they had reaped, but did not carry, not requiring all they had cut. The ground so near the edge was soft and yielding, and this dry hay of sedge and flag better to sit on. Bevis held Pan by the collar, and they waited a long time while the sun sank to the north-westwards, almost in front of them.

“No twilight in the tropics,” whispered Mark.

“But there’s the moon,” said Bevis.

The moon being about half full, was already high in the sky, and her light continued the glow of the sunset. Restless as they were, they sat still, and took the greatest care in slightly changing their positions for ease not to rustle the dry sedges. Pan did not like it, but he reconciled himself after awhile. Presently Mark, who was nearest the standing sedges, leaned forward and moved the gun. Bevis glanced over his shoulder and saw a young wild duck among the weeds by the shoal.

“Too far,” he whispered. It looked a long way.

Mark did not answer; he was aiming. Puff—bang! Bow-wow! Pan was in the water, dashing through the smoke before they could tell whether the shot had taken effect or not. The next moment they saw the duck struggling and splashing unable to dive.

“Lu—lu!”

“Go on, Pan!”

“Catch him!”

“Fetch him!”

“He’s got him!”

“He’s in the weeds.

“Look—he can’t get back—the duck drags in the weeds.”

“Pan! Pan! Here—here!”

“He can’t do it.”

“He’s caught.”

“He’ll sink.”

“Not he.”

“But he will.”

“No.”

After striving his hardest to bring the duck back through the thick weeds, Pan suddenly turned and swam to the shoal where the rushes grew. There he landed and stood a moment with the duck’s neck in his mouth: the bird still flapped and struggled.

“Here—here!” shouted Bevis, running along to attract the spaniel to a place where the weeds looked thinner. Mark whistled: Pan plunged in again; and this time, having learned the strength of the weeds, he swam out round them and laid the bird at their feet.

“It’s a beauty.”

“Look at his webbed feet!”

“But he’s not very big!”

“But he’s a young one.”

“Of course: the feathers are very pretty.”

“He kicks still.”

“Kill him. There; now we must pluck him

this evening. Some of the feathers will do for Frances."

"O! Frances! She's no use," said Mark, carrying his bird by the legs.

The head hung down, and Pan licked it. Plucking they found a tedious business. Each tried in turn till they were tired, and still there seemed no end to the feathers.

"There are thousands of them," said Bevis.

"Just as if they could not have a skin."

"But the feathers are prettier."

"Well, you try now."

Bevis plucked awhile. Then Mark tried again. This was in the courtyard of the hut. The moonlight had now quite succeeded to the day. By the watch it was past nine. Out of doors it was light, but in the hut Bevis had to strike a match to see the time.

"It's supper-time," he said.

"Now they are having breakfast at home, I suppose."

"I dare say we're quite forgotten," said Bevis. "People always are. Seven thousand miles away they're sure to forget us."

"Altogether," said Mark. "Of course they will. Then some day they'll see two strange men with very long beards and bronzed faces."

“ Broad-brimmed Panama hats.”

“ And odd digger-looking dresses.”

“ And revolvers in their pockets out of sight, come strolling up to the door and ask for—”

“ Glasses of milk, as they’re thirsty, and while they’re sipping—as they don’t really like such stuff—just ask quietly if the governor’s alive and kicking—”

“ And the Jolly Old Moke asleep in his arm-chair—”

“ And if mamma’s put up the new red curtains.”

“ Then they’ll stare—and shriek—”

“ Recognize and rumpus.”

“ Huge jollification ! ”

“ Everybody tipsy and happy.”

“ John Young tumbling in the pond.”

“ Bells ringing.”

“ I say, ought we to forgive the Bailiff and Polly ? ”

“ Hum ! I suppose so. But that’s a very long time yet ? ”

“ O ! a very long time. This duck will never be done.”

“ We forgot to have tea,” said Mark.

“ So we did ; and tea would be very nice. With dampers like the diggers,” said Bevis. “ Let’s have tea now.”

“Finish the horrid duck to-morrow,” said Mark. “I’ll hang him up.”

“Fire’s gone out,” said Bevis, looking from the gateway. “Can’t see any sparks.”

“Gone out long ago,” said Mark. “Pot put it out.”

They had left the pot on the ashes.

“It would be a good plan to light a fire inside the stockade now,” said Bevis. “It will do to make the tea, and keep things away in the night.”

“Lions and tigers,” said Mark. “If they want to jump the fence they wont dare face the fire. But it’s very warm; we must not make it by the hut.”

“Put it on one side,” said Bevis, “in the corner under the cliff. Bring the sticks.”

They had plenty of wood in the stockade, piled up, from the chips and branches and ends of the poles with which they had made the roof and fence. The fire was soon lit. Bevis got out the iron rod to swing the kettle. Mark went down and dipped the zinc bucket full of water.

“Are there any things about over the New Sea?” he said when he came back. “It’s dark as you go through the wood, and the water looks all strange by moonlight.”

“Very curious things are about I dare say,” said Bevis, who had lit the lantern, and was shaking tea into the tin teapot in the hut. “Curious magic things.”

“Floating round ; all misty, and you can’t see them.”

“But you know they’re there.”

“Genii.”

“Ghouls.”

“Vampires. Look, there’s a big bat—and another ; they’re coming back again.”

“That’s nothing ; everything’s magic. Mice are magic, especially if they’re red. I’ll show you in Faust. If they’re only dun they’re not half so much magic.”

“More mousey.”

“Yes. Besides, if you were in the wood you would see things behind the trees ; you might think they were shadows, but they’re not : and lights moving about—sparks—”

“Magic ? ”

“Magic. Stars are magic. There’s one up there. And there are things in trees, and satyrs in the fern, and those that come out of the trees and out of the water are ladies—very beautiful, like Frances—”

“Frances is very plain.”

“That she’s not.”

“She’s so short.”

“Well, the tree-ladies are not very large. If I had a book of secret lore, that’s the right name—”

“A magic book?”

“I’d make them come and dance and sing to us.”

“But are there no monsters?” said Mark, stirring the fire.

CHAPTER XVI.

NEW FORMOSA—MORNING IN THE TROPICS.

THE flames darted up, and mingling with the moonlight cast a reddish-yellow glare on the green-roofed hut, the yellowy cliff of sand, throwing their shadows on the fence, and illuming Pan, who sat at the door of the hut. The lantern, which Bevis had left on the floor, was just behind the spaniel. Outside the stockade the trees of the wood cast shadows towards them; the moon shone high in the sky. The weird calls of water-fowl came from a distance; the sticks crackled and hissed. Else all was silent, and the smoke rose straight into the still air.

“Green eyes glaring at you in the black wood,” said Bevis. “Huge creatures, with prickles on their backs, and stings: the ground heaves underneath, and up they come; one claw first—you see it poking through a chink—and then hot poisonous breath—”

“Let’s make a circle,” said Mark. “Quick! Let’s lock the gate.”

“Lock the gate!” Mark padlocked it. “I’ll mark the wizard’s foot on it. There,”—Bevis drew the five-angled mark with his pencil on the boards—“there, now they’re just done.”

“They can’t come in.”

“No.”

“But we might see them?”

“Perhaps, yes.”

“Let’s play cards, and not look round.”

“All right. Bezique. But the kettle’s boiling. I’ll make the tea.” He took the kettle off and filled the teapot. “We ought to have a damper,” he said.

“So we did: I’ll make it.” Mark went into the hut and got some flour, and set to work and made a paste: you see, if you are busy, you do not know about things that look like shadows, but are not shadows. He pounded away at the paste; and after some time produced a thick flat cake of dough, which they put in the ashes and covered over.

They put two boards for a table on the ground, in front of the hut door and away from the fire, and set the lantern at one end of the table. Bevis brought the teapot and the tin mugs, for they had for-

gotten cups and saucers, and made tea ; while Mark buttered a heap of biscuits.

“Load the matchlock,” said Bevis. Mark loaded the gun, and leaned it by the door-post at their backs, but within reach. Bevis put his bow and two arrows close at his side, as he sat down, because he could shoot quicker with his bow in case of a sudden surprise, than with the matchlock. The condensed milk took a few minutes to get ready, and then they began. The corner of the hut kept off the glow from the fire ; they leaned their backs against the door-posts, one each side, and Pan came in between. He gobbled up the buttered biscuits, being perfectly civilized ; now from one, now from the other, as fast as they liked to let him.

“This is the jolliest tea there ever was,” said Mark. “Isn’t it jolly to be seven thousand miles from anywhere ? ”

“No bothers,” said Bevis, waving his hand as if to keep people at a distance.

“Nothing but niceness.”

“And do as you please.”

“Had enough ? ”

“Yes. Bezique.”

“I’ll deal.”

“No—no ; cut.”

The cards were dealt on the two rough boards, and they played, using the old coins they had brought with them as counters. Pan watched a little while, then he retired, finding there was nothing more to eat, and stretched himself a few yards away. The fire fell lower, flickered, blazed again : the last sticks thrown on burning off in the middle broke and half rolled off one side and half the other ; the smoke ceased to rise, the heated vapour which took its place was not visible. By-and-by the moon’s white light alone filled the interior of the stockade, and entered in at the doorway of the hut, for the glimmer of the horn-lantern did not reach beyond the boards of their tables. At last the candle guttered and went out, but they played on by the moonlight.

“Ah, ah !” said Bevis presently.

“Double bezique !” shouted Mark ; “and all the money’s mine !”

Pan looked up at the noise.

“The proper thing is, to shoot you under the table,” said Bevis : “that’s what buccaneers do.”

“But there were no revolvers when we lived,” said Mark ; “only matchlocks.”

“Shovel them up,” said Bevis. “Broad gold

pieces, but you won't have them long. I'm tired to-night. I shall win them to-morrow, and your estate, and your watch, and your shirt off your back, and your wife—"

"I shan't have a wife," said Mark, yawning as he pocketed the coins, which were copper. "I don't want a Frances—O, no! thank you very much!"

"What's the time?"

"Nearly twelve."

"I'm tired."

"Make the bed."

They began to make it, and recollected that one of the rugs was under the teak-tree, where they had hoisted it up for an awning. Bevis took his bow and arrow; Mark his spear. They called Pan, and thus, well armed and ready for the monsters, marched across to the teak, glancing fearfully around, expectant of green blazing eyes and awful coiling shapes; quite fearless all the time, and aware that there was nothing. They had to pull up the poles to get the awning down. On returning to the stockade, the gate was padlocked and the bed finished. The lantern, in which a fresh candle had been placed, was hung to a cord from the ceiling, but they found it much in the way.

“If there’s an alarm in the night,” said Mark, “and anybody jumps up quick, he’ll hit his head against the lantern. Let’s put it on the box.”

“Chest,” said Bevis; “it’s always chest.”

Mark dragged the chest to the bed-side, and put the lantern on it, and a box of matches handy. The matchlock was hung up; the teapot and mugs and things put away, and the spear and bow and knobstick arranged for instant use. Bevis let down the carpet at the doorway, and it shut out the moonlight like a curtain. They took off their boots and got on the bed with their clothes on. Just as Bevis was about to blow out the candle, he remembered something.

“Mark—Lieutenant, how’s the barometer?”

“Went down in the ship, sir.”

“How’s the weather then? Look out and see if a tornado’s brewing.”

“Ay, ay, sir.”

Mark stepped under the curtain, looked round, and came in again.

“Sky’s clear,” he said. “Only the moon and a little shooting star, a very little one, a mere flicker just like striking a lucifer when it doesn’t light.”

“Streak of light on the wall.”

“Yes.”

“No tornado?”

“No.”

“Thirty bells,” said the captain. “Turn in. Lights out.” He blew out the candle and they made themselves comfortable.

“What’s that?” said Mark in a minute. A corner of the curtain was lifted, and let the moonlight in on the floor.

“Only Pan.”

Finding he was alone outside, Pan came in and curled up by the chest.

“Good-night.”

“Good-night.”

“Good-night, Pan,” said Bevis, putting out his hand and touching Pan’s rough neck. Almost before he could bring his hand back again they were both firm asleep. Quite tired out by such a long, long day of exertion and change, they fell asleep in a second, without any twilight of preliminary drowsiness. Change wearies as much as labour; a journey, for instance, or looking up at rows of pictures in different colours. They slept like buccaneers or humming-tops, only unconsciously throwing the covering rug partly off, for the summer night was warm. The continuance of easterly breezes had

caused the atmosphere to become so dry that there was no mist, and the morning opened clear, still, and bright.

After a while Pan stretched himself, got up, and went out. He could not leap the fence, but looking round it found a place where it joined the cliff, not quite closed up. They knew this, but had forgotten all about it. Pan pushed his head under, struggled, and scratched, till his shoulders followed as he lay on his side, and the rest followed easily. Roaming round, he saw the pot in which the bacon had been boiled still on the grey ashes of the fire under the teak. The lid was off, thrown aside, and he ran to the pot, put his paws on the rim, and lapped up the greasy liquor with a relish.

Loo, the cottage girl, could she have seen, would have envied him, for she had but a dry crust for breakfast, and would have eagerly dipped it in. Pan roamed round again, and came back to the hut and waited. In an hour's time he went out once more, lapped again, and again returned to watch the sleepers.

By-and-by he went out the third time and stayed longer. Then he returned, thrust his head under the curtain and uttered a short bark of impatient questioning, "Yap!"

“The genie,” said Mark, awaking. He had been dreaming.

“What’s the time?” said Bevis, sitting up in an instant, as if he had never been asleep. Pan leaped on the bed and barked, delighted to see them moving.

“Three o’clock,” said Mark. “No; why it’s stopped!”

“It’s late, I know,” said Bevis, who had gone to the doorway and lifted the curtain. “The sun’s high; it’s eight or nine, or more.”

“I never wound it up,” said Mark, “and—well I never! I’ve left the key at home.”

“It was my key,” said Bevis. One did for both in fact.

“Now we shan’t know what the time is,” said Mark. “Awfully awkward when you’re seven thousand miles from anywhere.”

“Awful! What a stupe you were; where did you leave the key?”

“On the dressing-table, I think; no, in the drawer. Let’s see, in my other waistcoat: I saw it on the floor; now I remember, on the mantelpiece, or else on the washing-stand. I know, Bevis; make a sundial!”

“So I will. No, it’s no use.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know when to begin.”

“When to begin?”

“Well the sun-dial must have a start. You must begin your hours, don’t you see.”

“I see; you don’t know what hour to put to the shadow.”

“That’s it.”

“But can’t you find out? Isn’t the sun always south at noon?”

“But which is quite south?”

“Just exactly proper south?”

“Yes, meridian is the name. I know, the north star!”

“Then we must wait till night to know the time to-day.”

“And then till the sun shines again—”

“Till to-morrow.”

“Yes.”

“I know!” said Mark; “Charlie. You make the sun-dial, and he’ll wave the handkerchief at four o’clock.”

“Capital,” said Bevis. “Just the very thing—like Jupiter’s satellites; you know, they hide behind, and the people know the time by seeing them. Charlie will set the clock for us. There’s always

a dodge for everything. Pan, Pan, you old rascal."

Bevis rolled him over and over. Pan barked and leaped on them, and ran out into the sunshine.

"Breakfast," said Mark; "what's for breakfast?"

"Well, make some tea," said Bevis, putting on his boots. "That was best. And, I say, we forgot the damper."

"So we did. It will do for breakfast."

The damper was raked out of the ashes, and having been left to itself was found to be well done, but rather burned on one side. When the burnt part had been scraped off, and the ashes blown from it, it tasted very fair, but extremely dry.

"The butter won't last long," said Mark presently, as they sat down to breakfast on the ground at their two boards. "We ought to have another shipload."

"Tables without legs are awkward," said Bevis, whose face was heated from tending the fire they had lit and boiling the kettle. "The difficulty is, where to put your knees."

"Or else you must lie down. We could easily make some legs."

"Drive short stakes into the ground, and put the

boards on the top," said Bevis. "So we will presently. The table ought to be a little one side of the doorway, as we can't wheel it along out of the way."

"Big stumps of logs would do for stools," said Mark. "Saw them off short, and stand them on end."

"The sun's very warm," said Bevis.

The morning sunshine looked down into their courtyard, so that they had not the least shade.

"The awning ought to be put up here over our table."

"Let's put it up, then. I say, how rough your hair looks."

"Well, you look as if you had not washed. Shall we go and have a swim?"

"Yes. Put the things away; here's the towels."

They replaced their breakfast things anywhere, leaving the teapot on the bed, and went down to the water, choosing the shore opposite Serendib, because on that side there were no weeds.

As they came down to the strand, already tearing off their coats, they stopped to look at the New Sea, which was still, smooth, and sunlit. Though it was so broad it did not seem far to-day to the yellow

cliff of the quarry, to the sward of the battle-field, and the massive heads of the sycamores under which the war had raged.

There was not a breath of wind, but the passage of so much air coming from the eastwards during the last week or so had left the atmosphere as clear as it is in periods of rain. The immense sycamores stood out against the sky, with the broad green curve of their tops drawn along the blue. Except a shimmer of uncertain yellow at the distant shore they could not see the reflection of the quarry which was really there, for the line of vision from where they stood came nearly level with the surface of the water, so that they did not look into it but along it.

Beneath their feet they saw to the bottom of the New Sea, and slender shapes of fish hovering over interstices of stones, now here, now gone. There was nothing between them and the fish, any more than while looking at a tree. The mere surface was a film transparent, and beneath there seemed nothing. Across on Serendib the boughs dipped to the boughs that came up under to meet them. A moorhen swam, and her image followed beneath, unbroken, so gently did she part the water that no ripple confused it. Farther the woods of the jungle

far away rose up, a mountain wall of still boughs, mingled by distance into one vast thicket.

Southwards, looking seawards, instead of the long path of gold which wavelets strew before him, the sun beamed in the water, throwing a stream of light on their faces, not to be looked at any more than the fire which Archimedes cast from his mirrors melting the ships. All the light of summer fell on the water, from the glowing sky, from the clear air, from the sun. The island floated in light, they stood in light, light was in the shadow of the trees, and under the thick brambles; light was deep down in the water, light surrounded them as a mist might; they could see far up into the illumined sky as down into the water.

The leaves with light under them as well as above became films of transparent green, the delicate branches were delineated with finest camel's hair point, all the grass blades heaped together were apart, and their edges apparent in the thick confusion; every atom of sand upon the shore was sought out by the beams, and given an individual existence amid the inconceivable multitude which the sibyl alone counted. Nothing was lost, not a grain of sand, not the least needle of fir. The light touched all things, and gave them to be.

The tip of the shimmering poplar had no more of it than the moss in the covert of the bulging roots. The swallows flew in light, the fish swam in light, the trees stood in light. Upon the shore they breathed light, and were silent till a white butterfly came fluttering over, and another white butterfly came under it in the water, when looking at it the particular released them from the power of the general.

“Magic,” said Bevis. “It’s magic.”

“Enchantment,” said Mark; “who is it does it—the old magician?”

“I think the book says its Circe,” said Bevis; “in the Ulysses book, I mean. It’s deep enough to dive here.”

In a minute he was ready, and darted into the water like an arrow, and was sent up again as an arrow glances to the surface. Throwing himself on his side he shot along. “Serendib!” he shouted, as Mark appeared after his dive under.

“Too far,” said Mark.

“Come on.”

Mark came on. The water did not seem to resist them that morning, it parted and let them through. With long scoops of their arms that were uppermost, swimming on the side, they slipped on

still between the strokes, the impetus carrying them till the stroke came again. Between the strokes they glided buoyantly, lifted by the water as swallows glide on the plane of the air. From the hand thrust out in front beyond the head to the feet presently striking back—all the space between the hands and feet they seemed to grasp. All this portion of the water was in their power, and its elasticity as their strokes compressed it threw them forward.

At each long sweep Bevis felt a stronger hold, his head shot farther through above the surface like the stem of the *Pinta* when the freshening breeze drove her. He did not see where he was going, his vision was lost in the ecstasy of motion ; all his mind was concentrated in the full use of his limbs. The delicious delirium of strength—unconsciousness of reason, unlimited consciousness of force—the joy of life itself filled him.

Presently turning on his chest for the breast-stroke he struck his knee, and immediately stood up.

“ Mark ! ”

Fortunately there were no stones, or his knee would have been grazed ; the bottom was sand. Hearing him call Mark turned on his chest and stood up too. They waded some way, and then

found another deep place, swam across that more carefully, and again walked on a shallow which continued to the shore of Serendib, where they stood by the willow boughs.

“Pan ! ”

CHAPTER XVII.

NEW FORMOSA—PLANNING THE RAFT.

PAN had sat on the strand watching them till they appeared about to land on the other side, then at the sound of his name he swam to them. Now you might see how superior he was, for the two human animals stood there afraid to enter the island lest a rough bough should abrade their skins, a thorn lacerate, or a thistle prick their feet, but Pan no sooner reached the land than he rushed in. His shaggy natural coat protected him.

In a minute out came a moorhen, then another, and a third, scuttling over the surface with their legs hanging down. Two minutes more and Pan drove a coot out, then a young duck rose and flew some distance, then a dab-chick rushed out and dived instantaneously, then still more moorhens, and coots.

“ Why, there are hundreds ! ” said Mark. “ What a place for our shooting ! ”

“First rate,” said Bevis. “It’s full of moorhens and all sorts.”

So it was. The island of Serendib was but a foot or so above the level of the water, and completely grown over with willow osiers (their blue gum), the spaces between the stoles being choked with sedges and reed-grass, vast wild parsnip stalks or “gix,” and rushes, in which mass of vegetation the water-fowl delighted. They had been undisturbed for a very long time, and they looked on Serendib as theirs; they would not move till Pan was in the midst of them.

“We must bring the matchlock,” said Mark. “But we can’t swim with it. Could we do it on the catamarans?”

“They’re awkward if you’ve got anything to carry,” said Bevis, remembering his dip. “I know—we’ll make a raft.”

“Then we can go to all the islands,” said Mark, “that will be ever so much better; why we can shoot all round them everywhere.”

“And go up the river,” said Bevis, “and go on the continent, the mainland, you know, and see if it’s China, or South America—”

“Or Africa or Australia, and shoot elephants—”

“And rabbits and hares and pewits, and pick

up the pearls on Pearl Island, and see what there is at the other end of the world up there," pointing southwards.

"We've never been to the end yet," said Mark. "Let's go back and make the raft directly."

"The catamaran planks will do capital," said Bevis, "and some beams, and I'll see how Ulysses made his, and make ours like it—he had a sail somehow."

"We could sail about at night," said Mark, "nobody would see us."

"No; Val or Charlie would be sure to see in the daytime; the stars would guide us at night, and that would be just proper."

"Just like they used to—"

"Yes, just like they used to when we lived three thousand years ago."

"Capital. Let's begin."

"So we will."

"Pan! Pan!"

Pan was so busy routing out the hitherto happy water-fowl that he did not follow them until they had begun to swim, having waded as far as they could. The shoals reduced the actual distance they had to swim by quite half, so that they reached New Formosa without any trouble, and dressed. They went to the hut that Bevis might read how Ulysses

constructed his ship or raft, and while they were looking for the book saw the duck which they had plucked the evening before.

This put them in mind of dinner, and that if they did not cook it, it would not be ready for them as it used to be at home. They were inclined to let dinner take its chance, but buttered biscuits were rather wearisome, so they concluded to cook the dinner first, and make the raft afterwards. It was now very hot in the stockade, so the fire was lit under the teak-tree in the shade, the duck singed, and hung on a double string from a hazel rod stuck in the ground. By turning it round the double string would wind up, and when left to itself unwind like a roasting-jack.

The heat of the huge fire they made, added to that of the summer sun, was too great—they could not approach it, and therefore managed to turn the duck after a fashion with a long stick. After they had done this some time, working in their shirt-sleeves, they became impatient, and on the eve of quarrelling from mere restlessness.

“It’s no use our both being here,” said Mark.
“One’s enough to cook.”

“One’s enough to be cooked,” said Bevis.
“Cooking is the most hateful thing I ever knew.”

“Most awful hateful. Suppose we say you shall do it to-day and I do it to-morrow, instead of being both stuck here by this fire?”

“Why shouldn’t you do it to-day, and *I* do it to-morrow?”

“Toss up, then,” said Mark, producing a penny.
“Best two out of three.”

“O! no,” said Bevis. “You know too many penny dodges. No, no; I know—get the cards, shuffle them and cut, and who cuts highest goes off and does as he likes—”

“Ace highest?”

“Ace.”

The pack was shuffled, and Mark cut a king. Bevis did not get a picture-card, so he was cook for that day.

“I shall take the matchlock,” said Mark.

“That you won’t.”

“That I shall.”

“You won’t, though.”

“Then I won’t do anything,” said Mark, sulking. “It’s not fair; if you had cut king you would have had the gun.”

Bevis turned his duck, poking it round with the stick, then he could not help admitting to himself that Mark was right. If he had cut a king he

would have taken the gun, and it was not fair that Mark should not do so.

“Very well,” he said. “Take it; mind it’s my turn to-morrow.”

Mark went for the matchlock, and came out of the stockade with it. But before he had gone many yards he returned into the hut, and put it up on the slings. Then he picked out his fishing-rod from the store-room, and his perch-line and hooks, mixed some mustard and water in his tin mug, and started off. Bevis, who had sat down far enough from the fire to escape the heat, did not notice him the second time.

Mark walked into the wood till he found a moist place, there he poured his mixture on the ground, and the pungent mustard soon brought some worms up. These he secured, but he did not know how to carry them, for the mug he used for drinking from, and did not like to put them in it. Involuntarily feeling his pockets as people do when in difficulty, he remembered his handkerchief; he put some moss in it, and so made a bundle. He had but one mug, but he had several handkerchiefs in the store-room, and need not use this one again.

Looking round the island for a place to fish, he came to a spot where a little headland projected on the Serendib side, but farther down than where

they had bathed. At the end of the headland a willow trunk or blue gum hung over the water, and as he came near a kingfisher flew off the trunk and away round Serendib. Mark thought this a likely spot, as the water looked deep, and the willow cast a shadow on one side, and fish might come for anything that fell from the boughs. He dropped his bait in, and sat down in the shade to watch his blue float, which was reflected in the still water.

He had not used his right to take the matchlock, because when he came out with it and saw Bevis, whose back was turned, he thought how selfish he was, for he knew Bevis liked shooting better than anything. So he put the gun back, and went fishing.

Against his own wishes Bevis acknowledged Mark's reason and right; against his own wishes Mark forbore to use his right that he might not be selfish.

While Mark watched his float Bevis alternately twisted up the duck, and sat down under the teak-tree with the *Odyssey*, in which he read that—

On the lone island's utmost verge there stood
Of poplars, pines, and firs a lofty wood,

from which Ulysses selected and felled enough for his vessel, and,—

At equal angles these disposed to join;
He smooth'd and squared them by the rule and line.

* * * * *

Long and capacious as a shipwright forms
Some bark's broad bottom to outride the storms,
So large he built the raft : then ribb'd it strong
From space to space, and nail'd the planks along ;
These form'd the sides : the deck he fashion'd last ;
Then o'er the vessel raised the taper mast,
With crossing sailyards dancing in the wind,
And to the helm the guiding rudder join'd.

Pondering over this Bevis planned his raft, intending to make it of six or eight beams of poplar, placed lengthways ; across these a floor of short lesser poles put close together ; thirdly, a layer of long poles ; and above these the catamaran planks for the deck. He had not enough plank to make the sides so he proposed to fix uprights and extend a railing all round, and wattle this with willows, which would keep off some of the wash of the waves, like bulwarks. Even then, perhaps, the sea might flush the deck ; so he meant to fasten the chest in the store-room on it as a locker, to preserve such stores as they might take with them.

A long oar would be the rudder, working it on the starboard side, and there would be a mast ; but of course such a craft could only sail before the wind—she could not tack. In shallow water they could pole along like a punt better than row, for the raft would be cumbrous. Arranging this in his

mind, he let the duck burn one side ; it had a tendency to burn, as he could not baste it. Soon after he had sat down again he wondered what the time was, and recollected the sun-dial.

This must be made at once, because it must be ready when Charlie made the signal. He looked up at the sun, whose place he could distinguish, because the branches sheltered his eyes from the full glare. The sun seemed very high, and he thought it must be already noon. Giving the duck a twist, he ran to the hut, and fetched a piece of board, his compasses, and a gimlet. Another twist, and then under the teak-tree he drew a circle with the compasses on the board, scratching with the steel point in the wood.

With the gimlet he bored two holes aslant to each other, and then ran for two nails and a file. In his haste, having to get back to turn the roast, he did not notice that the matchlock was hung up in the hut. He filed the heads off the nails, and then tapped them into the gimlet holes ; they wanted a little bending, and then their points met, forming a gnomon, like putting the two forefingers together.

Then he bored two holes through the board, and inserted other nails half through, ready for hammering into the post. The post he cut from one of

the poles left from the fence; it was short and thick, and he sharpened it at one end, leaving the top flat as sawn off. Fetching the iron bar, he made a hole in the ground, put the post in, and gave it one tap; then the duck wanted turning again.

As he returned to his work he remembered that in the evening the teak and the other trees of the wood cast long shadows towards the hut, which would blot out the time on the sun-dial. It ought to be put where the full beams would fall on it from sunrise to sunset. The cliff was the very place. He ran up and chose a spot which he could see would be free from shadow, pitched the post, and ran down to the duck.

Next he carried up the dial, and nailed it to the top of the post; the two nails kept it from moving if touched, and were much firmer than one. The gnomon at once cast a pointed shadow on that side of the circle opposite the sun, but there were as yet no marks for the hours. He could not stay to look at his work, but went down to the teak, and began to wonder why he did not hear Mark shoot, though very likely in the heat of the day the water-fowl did not cross the open water to the island.

Thinking of shooting reminded him of the sight so much wanted at the top of the barrel. He could

not solder anything on, nor drill a hole, and so fix it, nor was it any use to file a notch, because nothing would stick in the notch, as iron is not like wood. Perhaps sealing-wax would—a lump of sealing-wax—but he had none in the store-room; it would not look proper either, and was sure to get chipped off directly. Could he tie anything on? The barrel was fastened into the stock with wire, why not twist two pieces of wire round, and put a nail head (the nail filed off very short) between them, very much as hats are hung with the brim between two straps.

That would do, but presently he thought of a still easier way, which was to put a piece of wire round the barrel and fasten it, but not tight, so that it was like a loose ring. Then with the pliers seize the part at the upper side of the barrel and twist it, forming a little loop of the loose wire; this would tighten the ring, then twisting the upper loop round it would make a very short and tiny coil upon itself, and this coil would do capitally for a sight.

He wished Mark would come with the match-lock, that he might put the sight on at once. He looked at the duck; it seemed done, but he was not certain, and sat down to rest again in the shadow. A cooing came from the wood, so there were doves

which had not yet finished nesting. Bevis was very tired of turning the roast, and determined to try if they could not make an earth oven. The way he thought was to dig a hole in the ground, put in a layer of hot embers, then the meat; then another layer of hot embers; so that the meat was entirely surrounded with them: and finally, a cover of clay placed over to quite confine the heat.

One little hole lets out the steam or gas: it is made by standing a small stick in the oven, and then when all is finished, drawing it out so as to leave a tube. He was not certain that this was quite right, but it was all he could remember, and it would be worth trying. This horrible cooking took upso much time, and made him so hot and uncomfortable: shipwrecked people wanted a slave to do the cooking. But he thought he should soon whistle for Mark. Pan had gone with him, but now came back, as Bevis supposed, weary of waiting in ambush; but, in fact, with an eye to dinner.

Mark's float did not move: it stood exactly upright, it did not jerk, causing a tiny ripple, then come up, and then move along, then dive and disappear, going down aslant. It remained exactly upright, as the shot-weight on the line kept it. There was no wind, so the line out of the water did

not blow aside and cause the float to rotate. Long since he had propped his rod on a forked stick, and weighted the butt with a flat stone, to save himself the trouble of holding it.

He sat down, and Pan sat by him: he stroked Pan and then teased him; Pan moved away and watched, out of arm's reach. By-and-by the spaniel extended himself and became drowsy. Mark's eyes wearied of the blue float, and he too stretched himself, lying on his side with his head on his arm, so that he could see the float, if he opened his eyes, without moving. A wagtail came and ran along the edge of the sand so near that with his rod he could have reached it. Jerking his tail the wagtail entered the still water up to the joints of his slender limbs, then came out, and ran along again.

Mark's head almost touched the water: his hair (for his hat was off, as usual) was reflected in it, and a great brown water-beetle passed through the reflection. A dove—his parrakeet—came over and entered the wood; it was the same Bevis afterwards heard cooing. Mark half opened his eyes, and thought the wagtail's tiny legs were no thicker than one of Frances's hair-pins.

The moorhens and coots had now recovered from the fright Pan had given them. As he gazed through

the chinks of his eyelids along the surface of the water, he could see them one by one returning towards Serendib, pausing on the way among the weeds, swimming again, with nodding heads, turning this side and that to pick up anything they saw; but still, gradually approaching the island opposite. They all came from one direction, and he remembered that when Pan hunted them out, they all scuttled the same way. So did the wild duck; so did the kingfisher. "I believe they all go to the river," Mark thought; "the river that flows out through the weeds. Just wait till we have got our raft."

Something swam out presently from the shore of New Formosa; something nearly flush with the water, and which left a wake of widening ripples behind it, by which Mark knew it was a rat: for water-fowl, though they can move rapidly, do not cause much undulation. The rat swam out a good way, then turned and came in again. This coasting voyage he repeated down the shore several times.

To look along the surface, as Mark did, was like kneeling and glancing over a very broad and well polished table, your eyes level with it. The slightest movement was visible a great way—a little black speck that crossed was seen at once. The little

black speck was raised a very small degree above the surface, and there was something in the water not visible following it.

The water undulated, but less than behind the rat; now the moorhens nod their heads to and fro, as you or I nod: but this black speck waved itself the other way, from side to side, as it kept steadily onwards. Mark recognized a snake, swimming swiftly, its head (black only from distance and contrast with the gleam of the crystal top of the polished table) just above the surface, and sinuous length trailing beneath the water. He did not see whence the snake started, but he saw it go across to the weeds at the extreme end of Serendib, and there lost it.

He thought of the huge boa-constrictors hidden in the interior of New Formosa, they would be basking quite still in such heat, but he ought to have brought his spear with him. You never ought to venture from the stockade in these unknown places without a spear. By now the shadows had moved, and his foot was in the sunshine: he could feel the heat through the leather. Two bubbles came up to the surface close to the shore: he saw the second one start from the sand and rise up quickly with a slight wobble, but the sand did not move, and he could not see anything in it.

His eyes closed, not that he slept, but the gleam of the water inclined them to retire into the shadow of the lids. After some time there was a shrill pipe. Mark started, and lifted his head, and saw the kingfisher, which had come back towards his perch on the willow trunk. He came within three yards before he saw Mark; then he shot aside, with a shrill whistle of alarm, rose up and went over the island.

In starting up, Mark moved his foot, and a butterfly floated away from it: the butterfly had settled in the sunshine on the heated leather. With three flutters, the butterfly floated with broad wings stretched out over the thin grass by the shore. It was no more effort to him to fly than it is to thistledown.

The same start woke Pan. Pan yawned, licked his paw, got up and wagged his tail, looked one way and then the other, and then went off back to Bevis. The blue float was still perfectly motionless. Mark sat up, took his rod and wound up the winch, and began to wander homewards too, idly along the shore. He had gone some way when he saw a jack basking by a willow bush aslant from him, so that the markings on his back were more visible than when seen sideways, for in this position the fore-

shortening crowded them together. They are like the water-mark on paper, seen best at a low angle, or the mark on silk, and somewhat remind you of the mackerel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEW FORMOSA—KANGAROOS.

So soon as he was sure the jack had not noticed him, Mark drew softly back, and with some difficulty forced a way between the bramble thickets towards the stockade. He thus entered a part they had not before visited, for as the trees and bushes were not so thick by the water, their usual path followed the windings of the shore. Trampling over some and going round others, Mark managed to penetrate between the thickets, having taken his rod to pieces, as it constantly caught in the branches.

Next he came to a place where scarcely anything grew, everything having been strangled by those Thugs of the wood, the wild hops, except a few scattered ash-poles, up which they wound, indenting the bark in spirals. The ground was covered with them, for, having slain their supports, they

were forced to creep, so that he walked on hops; and from under a bower of them, where they were smothering a bramble bush, a nightingale “kurred” at him angrily.

He came near the nightingale’s young brood, safely reared. “Sweet kur-r-r!” The bird did not like it. These wild hops are a favourite cover with nightingales. A damp furrow or natural ditch, now dry, but evidently a watercourse in rain, seemed to have stopped the march of this creeping, twining plant, for over it he entered among hazel-bushes; and then seeing daylight, fancied he was close to the stockade; but to his surprise, stepped out into an open glade with a green knoll on one side.

The knoll did not rise quite so high as the trees, and there was a quantity of fern about the lower part, then an open lawn of grass, a little meadow in the midst of the wood. He saw a white tail disappear among the fern—there were then rabbits here.

“Bevis!” said Mark aloud. In his surprise he called to Bevis, as he would have done had Bevis been present. He ran to the knoll, and as he ran, more white tails—little ones—raced into the fern, where he saw burries and sand-heaps thrown out.

On the top of the knoll there were numerous signs of rabbits—places worn bare, and “runs,” or footpaths, leading down across the grass. He looked round, but could see nothing but trees, which hid the New Sea and the cliff at home.

Eager to tell Bevis of the discovery, and especially of the rabbits, which would furnish them with food, and were, above all, something fresh to shoot at, he ran down the hill so fast that he could not stop himself, though he saw something white in the grass. He returned, and found it was mushrooms, and he gathered between twenty and thirty in a few minutes—“buttons,” full grown mushrooms, and overgrown ketchup ones. How to carry them he did not know, having used his handkerchief already, and left his coat at home, till he thought of his waistcoat, and took it off and made a rough bundle of them in it. Then he heard Bevis’s whistle, the well-known notes they always used to call each other, and shouted in reply, but the shout did not penetrate so far as the shrill sound had done.

The whistle came from a different direction to that in which he supposed the cave to be, for in winding in and out the brambles he had lost the true course and had forgot to look at the sun. He found he could not go straight home, for the bram-

bles were succeeded by blackthorn, through which nothing human can move, and hardly a spaniel, when thick as it was here. He had to go all round by the opposite shore of the island, the weed-grown side, and so to the fire under the teak-tree.

"Where's the gun?" said Bevis, coming to meet him.

"I left it at home."

"No, you had it."

"I put it back as you were not coming."

"I never saw it."

"It's in the hut."

"Didn't you really take it?"

"No—really. We'll both go with the gun—"

"So we will." Bevis regretted now that he had made any difficulty. "No, it's your turn; you shall have it."

"I shan't," said Mark. "Look here"—showing the mushrooms—"splendid for supper, and I've found some rabbits!"

"Rabbits!"

"And a little green hill, and a kingfisher, and a jack. Come and get the gun, and let's shoot him. Quick."

Mark began to run for the matchlock, and they

left the duck to itself. Bevis ran with him, and Mark told him all about it as they went.

They talked so much by sign and mere monosyllables in this short run to the hut that I cannot transcribe it in words, though they understood each other better than had they used set speech. For two people always together know the exact meaning of a nod, the indication of a glance, and a motion of the lip means a page of conversation.

Having got the gun as they came back, Mark said perhaps Pan would eat the duck. Bevis called him, but he did not need the call. Gluttonous epicure as he was, Pan, at a whistle from Bevis, would have left the most marrowy bone in the world; but Bevis with a gun! why, Polly with a broom-stick could not have stopped him.

Before they got to the willow bush it had been settled that Mark should shoot at the jack, as the matchlock was loaded with shot, and Bevis wanted to shoot with ball, and reserved his turn for the time when he had made the new sight. Bevis held Pan while Mark went forward. The jack was there, but Mark could not get the rest in a position to take a steady aim, because the willow boughs interfered so.

So Bevis knelt down, still holding Pan, and Mark rested the long heavy barrel on his shoulder. The

shot plunged into the water, and the jack floated, blown a yard away, dead on his back; his head shattered, but the long body untouched. Pan fetched him out, and they laughed at the spaniel, he looked so odd with the fish in his mouth. Bevis wanted to see the glade and the rabbit's burries, but Mark said, if the duck was done, it would burn to a cinder, so they went home to their dinner. By the time they reached the teak-tree, the duck was indeed burned one side.

It was dry and hard for lack of basting, when they cut it up, but not unsavoury; and what made it nicer was, that every now and then they found shots—which their teeth had flattened—shots from their own gun. These they saved, and Mark put them in his purse; there were six altogether. Mark gloried in the number, as it was a long shot at the duck, and they showed that he had aimed straight. The ale in the wooden bottle was now stale, so they drank water, with a little sherry in it; and then started to see the discovery Mark had made. Pan went with them. The old spaniel had been there long before, for he found out the rabbits the first stroll he took after landing from the *Pinta*, but could not convey his knowledge to them.

Bevis marked out a tree, behind which they could

wait in ambush to shoot at the rabbits, as it was within easy range of their burries ; and then, as they felt it was now afternoon, they returned to the stockade, got the telescope and went up on the cliff to watch for Charlie's signal. The shadow of the gnomon on the dial had moved a good way since Bevis set it up. They had not the least idea of the hour, but somehow they felt that it was afternoon.

Long habit makes us clocks, if we pause, or are forced to consult ourselves. Slow changes in the frame proceed till they are recognized by the mind, or rather by the subtle connexion between the mind and the body ; for there seems a nexus, or medium, which conveys this kind of eighth sense from the flesh to the mental consciousness. Birds and animals know the time without a clock or dial, and the months or seasons almost to a day ; and so, too, the human animal, if driven from the conveniences of civilization, which save him the trouble of thinking soon reverts to these original and indefinable indications.

For instance (though in a different way), you can set the clock of your senses to awake exactly at any hour you choose in the morning. If you put your watch aside, reversing the process, and listen to the senses, they will tell you when it is afternoon.

The sandy summit of the cliff was very warm, and the bramble bushes were not high enough to give them any shade ; so that, to escape the sun, they reclined on the ground in front of the young oak-tree, and between it and the edge. Bevis looked through the telescope, and could see the sand-martins going in and out of their holes in the distant quarry.

Charlie was not on the hill, or, if so, he was behind a sycamore and out of sight ; but they knew he had not yet made the signal, because the herd of cows was down by the hollow oak, some standing in the water. They had not yet been called by the milkers. Sweeping the shore of Fir-Tree Gulf, and down the Mozambique to the projecting bluff which prevented farther view, he saw a crow on the sand, and another perched on a rail ; another sign that there was no one about.

“Any savages ?” said Mark.

“Not one.”

“Proas hauled up somewhere out of sight.”

Mark carefully felt his way to the very verge, and there sat with his legs dangling over. He said the cliff was quite safe ; and Bevis joined him. Underneath they could see deep into the water ; but though so still, they could not distinguish the

bottom. Clear at the surface, the water seemed to thicken to a dense shadow, which could not be seen through. It was deep there; they thought they should like a dive, only it was too far for them to plunge. There was a ball of thistledown on the surface, floating on the tips of its delicate threads; the spokes with which it flies as a wheel rolls.

"How did the rabbits—I mean the kangaroos—get here?" said Bevis presently. "I don't think they could swim so far."

"Savages might bring them," said Mark. "But they don't very often carry pets with them: they eat everything so."

"Nibbling men like goats nibbling hedges," said Bevis. "We must take care: but how did the kangaroos get on the island?"

"It is curious," said Mark. "Perhaps it wasn't always an island—joined to the mainland and the river cut a way through the isthmus."

"Or a volcano blew it up," said Bevis. "We will see if we can find the volcano."

"But it will be gone out now."

"O! yes. All those sort of things happened when there was no one to see them."

"Before we lived."

"Or anybody else."

A large green dragon-fly darted to and fro now under their feet and between them and the water ; now overhead, now up to the top of the oak, and now round the cliff and back again ; weaving across and across a warp and weft in the air. As they sat still he came close, and they saw his wings revolving, and the sun-light reflected from the membrane. Every now and then there was a slight snap, as he seized a fly, and ate it as he flew : so eager was he that when a speck of wood-dust fell from the oak, though he was yards away, he rushed at it and intercepted it before it could reach the ground. It was rejected, and he had returned whence he started in a moment.

“The buffaloes are moving,” said Mark. “They’re going up the hill. Get ready. Here, put it on my shoulder.”

The herd had begun to ascend the green slope from the water’s edge, doubtless in response to the milker’s shalloo which they could not hear on the island. Bevis rested the telescope on Mark’s shoulder, and watched. In point of fact it was not so far but that they could have seen any one by the quarry without a glass, but the telescope was proper.

“There he is,” said Mark.

Bevis, looking through the telescope, saw Charlie

come out from behind a sycamore, where he had been lying in the shadow, and standing on the edge of the quarry, wave his white handkerchief three times, with an interval between.

"It's all right. White flag," said Bevis. "He's looking. He can't see us, can he?"

"No, there are bushes behind us. If we stood up against the sky perhaps he might."

"I'll crawl to the dial," said Bevis, and he went on hands and knees to the sun-dial, where he could stand up without being seen, as there were brambles and the oak between him and the cliff. He drew a line with his pencil where the shadow of the gnomon fell on the circle, that was four o'clock. Mark came after, creeping too.

"We won't sit there again," said Mark, "when it's signal-time. He keeps staring. You can see his face through the telescope. We will keep behind the tree."

"There ought to be a crow's nest up in it," said Bevis. "Suppose we make one. Lash a stout stick across two boughs, or tie cords across and half round, so as to be able to sit and watch up there nicely."

"So we will. Then we can see if the savages are prowling round."

“The sedges are very thick that side,” said Bevis, pointing to the eastern shore where they had had such a struggle through them. “They would hide five thousand savages.”

They went down to the hut, and Bevis made the sight for the matchlock. The short spiral of copper wire answered perfectly, and he could now take accurate aim. But after he had put the powder in, and was just going to put a bullet, he recollected the kangaroos. If he shot off much at a target with bullets at that time in the afternoon it would alarm everything on the island, for the report would be heard all over it. Kangaroos and water-fowl are generally about more in the evening than the morning, so he put off the trial with ball and loaded with shot.

It was of no use going into ambush till the shadows lengthened, so he set about getting the tea while Mark sawed off two posts, and drove them into the ground at one side of the doorway of the hut. Each post had a cross-piece at the top, and the two boards were placed on these, forming a table. Bevis made four dampers, and at Mark's suggestion buried a number of potatoes in the embers of the fire, so as to have them baked for supper, and save more cooking.

The mushrooms were saved for breakfast, and the jack, which was about two pounds' weight, would do for dinner. When he had finished the table, Mark went to the teak-tree, and fetched the two poles that had been set up there for the awning. These he erected by the table, and stretched the rug from them over the table, fastening the other two edges to the posts of the hut.

They had found the nights so warm that more than one rug was unnecessary, and the other could be spared for a permanent awning under which to sit at table. Some tea was put aside to be drunk cold, miner fashion, and it was then time to go shooting. Mark was to have the gun, but he would not go by himself, Bevis must accompany him.

They had to go some distance round to get at the glade, and made so much noise pushing aside branches, and discussing as to whether they were going the right way, that when they reached it if any kangaroos had been out feeding, they had all disappeared.

"I will bring the axe," said Bevis, "and blaze the trees, then we shall know the way in a minute."

Fixing the rest so that he could command the burries on that side of the knoll, Mark sat down under

the ash-tree they had previously selected, and leaned the heavy matchlock on the staff. They chose this tree because some brake fern grew in front of it and concealed them. Pan had now come to understand this manner of hunting, and he lay down at once, and needed no holding. Bevis extended himself at full length on his back just behind Mark, and looked up at the sky through the ash branches.

The flies would run over his face, though Mark handed him a frond of fern to swish them with, so he partly covered himself with his handkerchief. The handkerchief was stretched across his ear like the top of a drum, and while he was lying so quiet a fly ran across the handkerchief there, and he distinctly heard the sound of its feet. It was a slight rustle, as if its feet caught a little of the surface of the handkerchief. This happened several times.

The sun being now below the line of the tree-tops, the glade was in the shadow, except the top of the knoll, up which the shadow slowly rose like a tide as the sun declined. Now the edge of the shadow reached a sand-heap thrown out from a burrow; now a thicker bunch of grass; then a thistle; at last it slipped over the top in a second.

Mark could see three pairs of tiny, sharp-pointed

ears in the grass. He knew these were young rabbits, or kangaroos, too small for eating. They were a difficulty, they were of no use, but pricked up and listened, if he made the least movement, and if they ran in would stop larger ones from coming out. There was something moving in the hazel stoles across the glade which he could not make out, and he could not ask Bevis to look and see because of these minute kangaroos.

Ten minutes afterwards a squirrel leaped out from the hazel, and began to dart hither and thither along the sward, drawing his red tail softly over the grass at each arching leap as lightly as Jack drew the tassel of his whip over his mare's shoulder when he wished to caress and soothe her. Another followed, and the two played along the turf, often hidden by bunches of grass.

Mark dared not touch Bevis or tell him, for he fancied a larger rabbit was sitting on his haunches at the mouth of a hole fringed with fern. Bevis under his handkerchief listened to Pan snapping his teeth at the flies, and looked up at the sky till four parrots (wood-pigeons) came over, and descended into an oak not far off. The oak was thick with ivy, and was their roost-tree, though they did not intend to retire yet.

Presently he saw a heron floating over at an immense height. His wings moved so slowly he seemed to fly without pressure on the air—as slowly as a lady fans herself when there is no one to coquet with. The heron did not mean to descend to the New Sea, he was bound on a voyage which he did not wish to complete till the dusk began, hence his deliberation. From his flight you might know that there was a mainland somewhere in that direction.

Bang! Mark ran to the knoll, but Pan was there before him, and just in time to seize a wounded kangaroo by the hindquarter as he was paddling into a hole by the fore paws. Mark had seen the rabbit behind the fringe of fern move, and so knew it really was one, and so gently had he got the matchlock into position, moving it the sixteenth of an inch at a time, that Bevis did not know he was aiming. By the new sight he brought the gun to bear on a spot where he thought the rabbit's shoulder must be, for he could not see it, but the rabbit had moved, and was struck in the haunch, and would have struggled out of reach had not Pan had him.

The squirrel had disappeared, and the four parrots had flown at the report.

“This island is full of things,” said Bevis, when

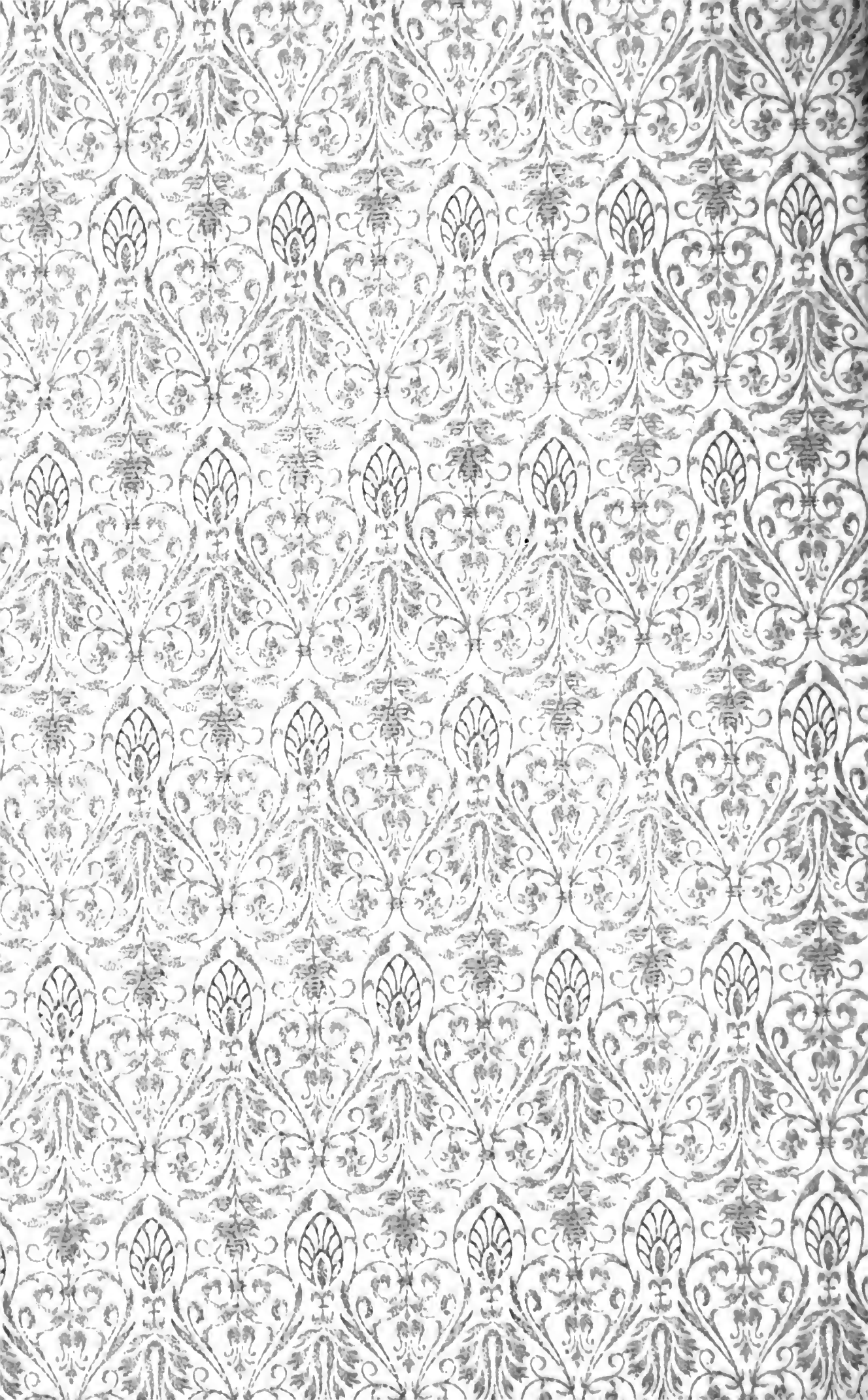
Mark told him about the squirrel. "You find something new every hour, and I don't know what we shan't find at last. But you have had all the shooting and killed everything."

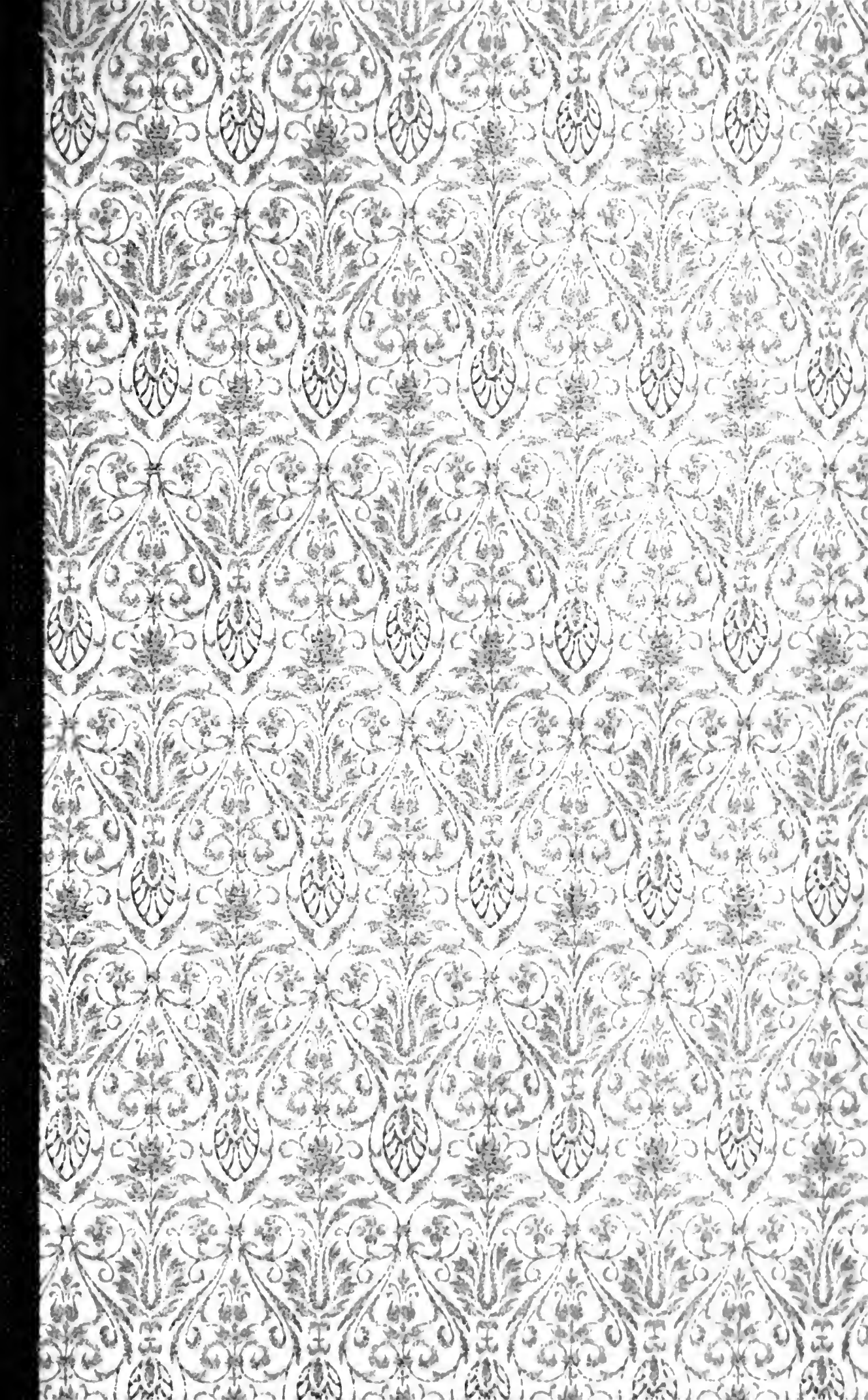
"Well, so I have," said Mark. "The duck, and the jack, and the kangaroo. You *must* shoot something next."

END OF VOL. II.

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